

THE 1981 UFMCC GENERAL CONFERENCE

In addition to task force members, input from within UFMCC has been received from the following:

DISTRICT CONFERENCES

Mid-Atlantic District
Northeast District
South Atlantic District
South Central District
Mid-Central District
Southeast District
Canadian District

CHURCHES

MCC Galveston
MCC Waterloo
MCC Portland
MCC San Francisco
MCC East Bay
MCC Toronto
MCC Vancouver
MCC Detroit
MCC Houston
MCC Illiamo
MCC Boulder
MCC New York
MCC Miami Beach
MCC Memphis (Board of Directors)

INDIVIDUALS

Rev. Elder John Hose	Rev. Karen Ziegler
Rev. Elder Troy Perry	Rev. Donna Vinson
Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson	Rev. Bill Hein
Rev. Reid Christensen	Rev. Jay Deacon
Rev. Jeffrey Pulling	Rev. Ron Anderson
Rev. Marge Ragona	Rev. Gilbert Lincoln
Rev. Brenda Cisneros-Hunt	Rev. Steven Quesnel
Rev. Howard Wells	Rev. Ron Pannell
Ms. Rhea Miller	Rev. Jim Dykes
Mr. Robert Parker	Rev. Richard Weatherly
Mr. Michael Jefferis	Rev. Philip Speranza
Ms. Linda Lopez	Rev. Bruce Hill
Ms. Margaret Trotter	Rev. Bruce Hughes
Mr. Adam DeBaugh	Rev. Charles Larsen
Mr. Carl Cornish	Rev. Claudia Vierra
Ms. Rene McCoy	Rev. Candace Naisbitt
Dr. Richard Follett	Rev. Marshall Williams
Mr. Emmett Watkins	Rev. Dee Lamb
Ms. Leslie Philipps	Rev. Gerald Motto
Mr. Don McRae	Rev. Jane Carl

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

Elders' Task Force On Inclusive Language

30th April 1981

Dear Friends in Christ—

The Elders' Task Force On Inclusive Language was called into being at the June 1979 meeting of the Board of Elders as recorded in the following excerpt from the minutes:

In order to reverse what we perceive to be a potentially unhealthy trend of polarization on the issue of inclusive language, the Board of Elders will appoint an "Elders' Task Force" to report to the Elders and to the General Conference of 1981, with the mandate: (1) To research, discuss and propose to the Fellowship a definition of inclusive language, its parameters, and guidelines for appropriate usage in the life and worship of UFMCC churches. The method of that research will include the grass-roots study method used by the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order in the development of the six questions, soliciting input from every local congregation, district and member of UFMCC congregations. (2) To apply that research and those guidelines to the UFMCC Statement of Faith as found in the UFMCC By-laws; and to submit these findings and make recommendations to General Conference in 1981.

The establishment of the Task Force was presented to the 9th General Conference in the Elders' white paper and was approved by that conference.

The Task Force began work after the Los Angeles General Conference, over the phones and through the mail. Following the grass-roots model, input was requested from churches, districts, commissions, etcetera. We met in Washington D.C. from 21st to 25th July 1980 to draft our initial report. That report was circulated in October 1980 throughout the Fellowship for feedback. The various suggestions for revision were considered and this final report was drawn up at a meeting of the Task Force in Detroit in March of 1981. This report is being circulated for study and feedback in preparation for the General Conference.

Every attempt has been made to get as much input as possible from throughout UFMCC. In addition to the two hour committee-of-the-whole discussion during the business meeting, time is being set aside during the conference for individuals and groups to meet with the Task Force to discuss the report. Time has been allotted for these discussions to take place both before the Wednesday business meeting's committee-of-the-whole and between that meeting and the Friday vote. We are attempting to give you every opportunity to help us make the report as good and as acceptable as possible. If you wish to meet with us, please let me know so I can draw up a schedule.

Please note that the report will be voted on in two sections:

Section I: Recommendations 1 to 14 will require majority support for adoption as UFMCC's recommendations. Please remember you are not voting to approve the examples. They are provided only in an attempt to clarify the recommendations.

Section II: The recommended By-law changes require a 2/3 vote for adoption.

Enclosed also is a partial list of those individuals, churches, etcetera who have provided input to the Task Force.

Thank you for your suggestions and support.

s/s Rev. Brent Hawkes

Reverend Brent Hawkes
Chairperson

Please send all responses to:

MCC Toronto
730 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario M5S-2R4

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TASK FORCE

INTRODUCTION TO GUIDELINES

The inclusive language task force was created to deal with the issue of language. Language, however, is not so simple a matter as it might first appear. How we speak about something not only describes the experience, but often shapes and creates it. The power and significance of language, words, the word, was clearly understood by the authors of Scripture who identified the act of creation with God's Word, God's speaking. The imagery of God's interaction with humanity is consistently expressed in terms of God's Word or speaking. The early prohibition against uttering God's name was a recognition of the power that a name or word holds. Indeed God's delegating to humanity the authority to name the birds and animals was an act of empowerment. Thus, when we deal with language in general, and God language in particular, we are venturing into an area of the deepest significance, and it is important that we proceed with care and with caution.

At the same time, both the Biblical tradition and the history of the faith community reveal that the one constant in God language is that of change. And how could it be otherwise? For it is a living God whom we worship and respond to. Both as individuals and as communities our understanding and experience of this God grows as we grow, and growth inevitably brings change.

The Bible in its present form evolved over a period of many centuries. Beginning as stories of faith passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, these stories were eventually written down and added to. Different generations of faith communities shaped, edited, and retold these stories in light of their own understanding and experience of God. Still other communities later on discussed and debated which stories and which versions would be included as scripture and which would not. (The fact that even today, the Jews, the Catholics, and the Protestants all have slightly different scriptures vividly demonstrates that different perspectives have led communities to different determinations of God's Word.)

It is not surprising then, that we, in our age, following the tradition of our forebears in the faith, are retelling and reshaping the great stories of faith in light of our own experience and our own understanding of that same living God.

Such a restatement is a particular hallmark of any prophetic age, when God calls us into wider understandings of old truths and relationships in light of changing events and experience. It was after all, the reformulation of the faith by the prophets in response to the destruction of Israel that renewed that faith. It was the restatement of the law in the life and teachings of Jesus that fulfilled that law. It was the re-interpretation of who is the faith community by Paul that laid the foundation for an inclusive and universal church.

Any such change is also accompanied by tremendous resistance and hostility by those who seek to be loyal to the old formulations. Religious institutions and leaders in particular are susceptible to this form of blindness. Jesus' complaint that the people who loudly proclaim their veneration of the prophets of old are the same people who are stoning the prophets in their midst, is no less a problem in our own age.

If we can be certain that God is asking each of us to change in our understanding, we can be less certain as to the direction of that change. Is a new direction the leading of a living God or is it a turning away from the path that God has set before us? This, of course, is always the crucial question. For in our struggle together as a community, the debate is never between those who say we should follow the Word of God and those who say we should not – how easy that would be: but rather between those who have differing understandings of what in fact is God's Word for us. Since we know that our knowledge and our prophecy is imperfect, we cannot pretend that any of our beliefs, no matter how deeply held, are final or error-free formulations. How then do we approach change? It seems that we must always ask the same question. Does the intended change lead to a richer, deeper, more faithful understanding and experience of the God we have met in our own lives as well as in the testimony of the communities of faith throughout the ages, or does it lead to some diminished or self-serving view? This question does not always yield an immediate answer, but at least it delivers us from the meaningless spectacle of shouting Bible verses at one another and pretending that such a futile exercise is true reflection and examination.

In approaching the question of inclusive language, we need to consider the nature of the change that would take place. For what is being proposed is not merely a cosmetic change to politically mollify vociferous factions in our midst, but rather a different way of thinking, understanding, and speaking about God. Is that way a richer, deeper, more faithful one, or a diminished and self-serving one?

The members of the inclusive language task force, though representing diverse cultural and theological perspectives, are united in believing the guidelines here presented will enrich rather than diminish our faith experience. For the changes that these guidelines represent are in the interest of enlarging and expanding our understanding and experience of God. By no longer identifying God with words or concepts primarily or exclusively associated with one gender, one race, one group, we more faithfully witness to the nature of a God who is not limited to one gender, one race, or one group.

The fact that such a change is neither familiar nor comfortable for many of us does not mean that we need not expend the effort. Allowing our lives to be transformed by the power of God often involves our submitting to changes that we initially resist. The fact that such a change requires our learning to restate the traditional formulations of our faith in light of God's present Word is no less than other communities of faith have had to do before us. Indeed, to be part of such an emerging restatement of God's Word is not a burden, but a sacred privilege.



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PREAMBLE

The reason we need to find and use inclusive language in our church life has been widely misunderstood. Inclusive language has often been urged upon congregations on grounds that the use of traditional, non-inclusive language upsets and angers some who then avoid the church. As Christians we need to be concerned about the feelings of others; however, if the only reason we use inclusive language is that it keeps some people from getting upset, then what of those who find the use of inclusive language disturbing because of its unfamiliarity? The principle which guides the life and practice of the church cannot be 'what do most people find comfortable,' but rather, 'what is God's will and purpose.' The reason we need to use inclusive language is not because we want to keep a particular group happy, but because it is necessary to promote justice, reconciliation and love, the agenda to which we Christians have been called.

Because of human sin, we live in a world of division and oppression. Groups which have traditionally exercised control over other groups inevitably and often unconsciously seek to preserve that superior status by denying the same access to power and privilege to others that they themselves enjoy. Such denial may be blatant in the form of discriminatory laws or customs, or it may be hidden but even more potent in the form of oppressive concepts or language. The insidious nature of language which serves to emphasize one group as the norm or standard is that it reinforces that group's primacy and importance every time we think or speak, thus, it becomes automatic or 'natural' to ascribe greater weight to that group. Justice, reconciliation and love demand that we overcome oppression wherever it exists, and we cannot exclude the oppressive structures of our language from this task.

The use of inclusive language does more than overcome a barrier to equal access. It frees us to apprehend and convey the wider truth. Paul urges the Corinthians to widen their hearts that they might fully experience the gospel (II Cor. 6:13). In the same spirit, he might urge us to widen our understanding so that we might better grasp the richness and fullness of God as well as of our own humanity. It is our openness to move beyond comfortable and familiar images that enables us to grow in our relationship with God. The importance of inclusive language is that it serves to liberate everyone.

SECTION I

1. What is inclusiveness?

Inclusiveness is an attitude or stance of mutuality and openness towards others that recognizes everyone's right of equal access to the experience and realization of wholeness, and it is a commitment to remove barriers between individuals and among communities that deny such access.

2. What is inclusive language?

Inclusive language reflects an attitude or stance of mutuality and openness towards others that recognizes everyone's right of equal access to the experiences and realization of wholeness.

Inclusive language reflects a sensitivity to overcoming barriers that exist between individuals and among communities in such areas as gender, race, class, age, physical differences, nationality, theological beliefs, culture and lifestyle.

3. Guidelines for inclusive language regarding gender.

a. References to people.

i) Use nongendered terms or inclusive gendered terms when referring to all sexes.

(eg. Instead of 'man' or 'mankind,' use 'human,' 'humanity,' 'humankind,' 'people,' 'all,' 'men and women,' 'female and male.' Do not use 'brothers in Christ' or 'Sons of God' or 'brotherhood,' but 'Christians,' 'friends,' 'community,' 'people of God,' 'children of God' or 'sisters and brothers.')

ii) Pronouns should not be of a single gender when referring to all sexes.

(eg. Instead of "A Christian should read his Bible daily" use "Christians should read their Bibles daily" (plural) - "A Christian should read his or her Bible daily" (both sexes) - "A Christian should read their Bible daily" (currently nonstandard grammar but used increasingly) - "A Christian should read the Bible daily" (drop the pronoun) - "The Bible should be read by Christians" (passive voice).

iii) Terms for occupations and roles should not refer to one gender.

(eg. Do not add diminutives of 'ess' or 'ette,' as in 'priestess.' It is a diminutive and demeaning to refer to women or gay men as 'girls.' Do not use 'spokesman' or 'chairman,' but 'chairperson' or 'chair.' Do not use 'man the booth' but 'staff the booth.' Forms of address should not call attention to sex, race or nationality, but to the role: not 'woman-' or 'gay-' or 'Hispanic-' minister, but 'minister.')

b. Inclusive language for God.

i) Use nongendered or inclusive gendered terms for God wherever such improvements do not alter the fundamental meaning. If a gendered term is necessary or desirable, terms of the other gender should also be used for balance.

(Examples of nongendered terms for God: Creator, Maker, Sovereign, Holy One, Spirit, Lover, Ruler, Guide, Shepherd, Rock, Source of Life, Yahweh, the Almighty, Parent, Friend, Most High.)

ii) Balance male images for God with female images.

(eg. Nurturer, the Breastfed One, Mother, Midwife, Mother Eagle or Hen.)

iii) Where possible, replace pronouns with nongendered nouns or use balanced gendered pronouns or words such as 'who,' 'whom,' 'one' and 'Godself.'

c. Inclusive language for Jesus the Christ.

The historical person, Jesus, was male. "The historical fact that Jesus was male affirms not that God

chose to become incarnate with masculine characteristics, but that Jesus was truly human as well as truly divine. And because Jesus incorporates the humanity of both men and women, it is appropriate"* . . . to emphasize the full humanity by minimizing the use of male pronouns. (*page 21, *All May Be One: A Guide to Inclusive Church Language*, The Task Force on Women, Presbytery of the Twin Cities area, Minneapolis, Minnesota 1979.)

- d. The task force recommends as options the use of direct address, adjectives and verbs to replace nouns or pronouns in dealing with inclusive language, carefully considering whether meaning or purpose would be adversely changed.

(eg. Change "He's got the whole world in His hands" to "You've got the whole world in Your hands.")

4. Guidelines for inclusive language regarding race.

If we are indeed going to be an inclusive church, we must acknowledge that we are the products of our past. Incorporated within our Christian religious heritage is a long history of racism (conscious and unconscious). Racism, whether conscious or unconscious, is destructive and must be overcome in order for us to be whole in our Christian faith. So, in keeping with our guideline for inclusivity, we strongly recommend the elimination of racist language, imagery and symbols in references to people, God, Jesus Christ, scripture, hymns, songs, liturgy and contemporary language.

(eg. We recommend not using language which suggests that white is the preferred color, such as "wash me white as snow." Instead, use "pure as hope" or "free of sin." Instead of "pearly white gates" use "heavenly gates" and instead of "robes of pure white" use "spotless robes." We discourage the exclusive use of dark colors in liturgical attire to indicate death or mourning and we discourage the exclusive use of white to indicate joy or life. The best solution is to show that on the authority of the Bible black and darkness can be positive symbols — symbols of the divine and of goodness.)

"The paradox of Christianity is that what is wisdom to reason is foolishness to God, and what seems foolish or irrational to reason is the true wisdom that leads to redemption. The darkness from which reason flees is the true path to truth and being. This is the constant teaching of the scriptures. The greatest redemptive acts in the history of salvation were done at night or in darkness: the first creation, the night of the Exodus, the night of the incarnation, the night of the Last Supper, the night of the Resurrection. There is no other way to life, truth and being but through the positive darkness of Faith." (page 162-3, *The Dark Center: A Process Theology of Blackness*, Bulalio Baltazar, Paulist Press, New York 1973.)

The task force had a problem dealing with the separation of the issues of pigmentation (white, black) and illumination (light, dark). Because of its racism, society has so strongly interwoven the two. In a technical and a theological sense they are indeed separate issues whereas, in their practical application, they are often combined. We need to be especially mindful of how we use terms of lightness and darkness.

5. The relation of inclusive language to the life and worship of the church.

The above guidelines should be applied when reading translations of scripture, in hymns, songs and liturgy, and in contemporary language.

(eg. White as good and black as evil.)	(racism)
Church as 'she.'	(sexism)
America as the U.S.	(nationalism)
U.S. as normative.	(nationalism)
"Anybody who is somebody will be there."	(classism)
"The Church is in the wrong section of town."	(classism)
"Everyone can afford to go if they choose."	(classism)

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | "Don't be an Indian-giver." | (racism and culture) |
| 2 | "You don't look 35." | (ageism) |
| 3 | Unsigned worship, and 'deaf and dumb.' | (physical difference) |
| 4 | "He's not a real Christian." | (theological beliefs) |
| 5 | "Act like a real man. Act like a real woman." | (lifestyle) |
| 6 | "All of us in MCC have been oppressed as gays and lesbians." | (lifestyle) |
| 7 | Satan as male. | (sexism) |
| 8 | 6. We recommend that the guidelines of this commission be similarly developed for each of the languages | |
| 9 | which UFMCC congregations speak. | |
| 10 | 7. The task force recommends that inclusive language be introduced in membership classes of local con- | |
| 11 | gregations as an area of discussion and education. | |
| 12 | 8. The task force recommends that these guidelines be applied at all levels of the life of UFMCC, both in | |
| 13 | written, visual and spoken form, on the local, national and international levels. | |
| 14 | 9. The task force recommends that at all UFMCC functions at the local, national and international level, | |
| 15 | all participants, to include outside guests, be informed of these guidelines. | |
| 16 | 10. The task force recommends that the UFMCC Department of Christian Education revise and develop | |
| 17 | materials using these guidelines, including production of a packet and study guide for use in studying | |
| 18 | inclusive language. | |
| 19 | 11. The task force recommends that the UFMCC commission a body to provide us with an inclusive scripture | |
| 20 | that incorporates these guidelines. In the meantime, great care should be taken in applying these guide- | |
| 21 | lines to scripture. | |
| 22 | 12. The task force recommends to the Ministerial Credentials and Affairs Committee that in evaluating | |
| 23 | ministers it include an opportunity for the candidates to demonstrate their readiness to use inclusive | |
| 24 | language. | |
| 25 | 13. The task force recommends that these guidelines be applied to the work of the Hymnody Committee. | |
| 26 | 14. The task force recommends that UFMCC use the name of the month and day in giving dates, since order | |
| 27 | varies among countries when only numerals are used (eg. 6/2/80 can be June 2 or February 6). Also, | |
| 28 | seasonal references should be eliminated, and months used instead (eg. not 'Fall Session' but 'September | |
| 29 | Session'). | |

SECTION II

- 30 15. Recommendations for Statement of Faith.
- 31 UFMCC By-laws, Article III: Doctrine, Sacraments and Rites.
- 32 A. Doctrine: Christianity is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and is the religion set forth in the
- 33 Scriptures. *Jesus Christ is foretold in the Old Testament, presented in the New Testament, and*
- 34 *proclaimed by the Christian Church in every age and in every land.*
- 35 Founded in the interest of offering a church home to all who confess and believe, the Universal
- 36 Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches moves in the mainstream of Christianity.
- 37 Our faith is based upon the principles outlined in the historic creeds: Apostles' and Nicene.
- 38 We believe:
- 39 1. *In one triune God, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, of one substance and of*

three persons: God - our Parent-Creator; Jesus - begotten of God, God in flesh, human; and the Holy Spirit - God as our Sustainer.

2. That the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, showing forth God to every person through the law and the prophets, and finally, completely and ultimately on earth in the being of Jesus Christ.
3. That Jesus . . . the Christ . . . historically recorded as living some 2,000 years before this writing, is *God incarnate, of human birth, fully God and fully human, and that by being one with the will of God*, Jesus has demonstrated once and forever that all people are likewise Children of God, being spiritually made in God's image.
4. That the Holy Spirit is God making known God's love and interest to all people. The Holy Spirit is God, available to and working through all who are willing to place their welfare in God's keeping.
5. Every person is justified by Grace to God through faith in Jesus Christ.
6. We are saved from loneliness, despair and degradation through God's gift of grace, as was declared by our *Saviour*. Such grace is not earned, but is a pure gift from a God of pure love. We further commend the *community* of the faithful to a life of prayer; to seek genuine forgiveness for unkind, thoughtless and unloving acts; and to a committed life of Christian service.
7. The Church serves to bring all people to God through Christ. To this end, it shall arrange for regular services of worship, prayer, interpretation of the Scriptures, and edification through the teaching and preaching of the Word.

B. Sacraments: This church embraces two holy Sacraments:

1. Baptism by water and the Spirit, as recorded in the Scriptures, shall be a sign of the dedication of each life to God and God's service. Through the words and acts of this sacrament, the recipient is identified as God's own Child.
2. Holy Communion is the partaking of blessed bread and wine in accordance with *the words of Jesus*: "This is my body . . . this is my blood," (Matthew 26:26-28.)
All who believe, confess and repent and seek God's love through Christ, after examining their consciences, may freely participate in the communal meal, signifying their desire to be received into *community with Jesus Christ*, to be saved by *Jesus Christ's* sacrifice, to participate in *Jesus Christ's* resurrection, and to commit their lives anew to *the service of Jesus Christ*.

The work of this task force is but one step in an ongoing process. The issue is not dead nor resolved. A step has been taken.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elders' Task Force on Inclusive Language

Rev. Brent Hawkes (chair), MCC Toronto, Ontario, Canada (*) (**)
 Rev. Willie White, St. John's MCC, Raleigh, NC, USA (*) (**)
 Lei Garcia, MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO, USA (*)
 Rev. Shelley Hamilton, MCC Manhattan, NY, USA (*) (**)
 Rev. Edward Hougen, MCC Boston, MA, USA (*) (**)
 Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull, MCC Washington, DC, USA (*) (**)
 Annette Beall, MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX, USA (*)
 Rev. Delores Berry, MCC Baltimore, MD, USA (*) (**)
 Rev. Jose Mojica, UFMCC (**)

(*) Attended composition of draft report
 (**) Attended composition of final report

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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**DRAFT REPORT
OF
THE ELDERS TASK FORCE ON INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
TO
THE 1981 UFMCC GENERAL CONFERENCE**

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

Elders Task Force On Inclusive Language

14th October 1980

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Elders Task Force on Inclusive Language was called into being at the June 1979 meeting of the Board of Elders as recorded in the following excerpt from the minutes:

In order to reverse what we perceive to be a potentially unhealthy trend of polarization on the issue of inclusive language, the Board of Elders will appoint an "Elders Task Force" to report to the Elders and to the General Conference of 1981, with the mandate: (1) To research, discuss and propose to the Fellowship a definition of inclusive language, its parameters, and guidelines for appropriate usage in the life and worship of UFMCC churches. The method of that research will include the grass-roots study method used by the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order in the development of the six questions, soliciting input from every local congregation, district and member of UFMCC congregations. (2) To apply that research and those guidelines to the UFMCC Statement of Faith as found in the UFMCC By-laws; and to submit these findings and make recommendations to General Conference in 1981.

The establishment of the Task Force was presented to the 9th General Conference in the Elders' white paper and was approved by that conference.

The Task Force began work after the Los Angeles General Conference, over the phones and through the mail. Following the grassroots model, input was requested from churches, districts, commissions, etc. We met in Washington D.C. from July 21st to 25th to draft our initial report. *This report is now being circulated throughout the Fellowship for further feedback. The various suggestions for revision will be considered and the final report will then be circulated in advance of the 10th General Conference.*

This initial report is not viewed by members of the Task Force as the final resolution of this issue since our language is continually changing. We are excited to have been able to make a contribution. We are a diverse group of people coming from many different backgrounds. It is our desire that you examine this draft report very carefully over the next few months and present your questions, suggestions and general comments by 1st April 1981. We will then consider changes or additions and draw up our final report.

We believe that we can be blessed with a healing experience around this issue at the Houston General Conference if you would assist by giving us some feedback.

We await your response.

ELDERS TASK FORCE ON INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Rev. Brent Hawkes (Chair)
Ms. Annette Beall
Rev. Delores Berry
Ms. Jennie Bull
Ms. Lei Garcia
Rev. Shelley Hamilton
Rev. Ed Hougen
Rev. Jose Mojica
Rev. Willie White

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Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart

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PREAMBLE

The reason we need to find and use inclusive language in our church life has been widely misunderstood. Inclusive language has often been urged upon congregations on grounds that the use of traditional, non-inclusive language upsets and angers some who then avoid the church. As Christians we need to be concerned about the feelings of others; however, if the only reason we use inclusive language is that it keeps some people from getting upset, then what of those who find the use of inclusive language disturbing because of its unfamiliarity? The principle which guides the life and practice of the church cannot be 'what do most people find comfortable,' but rather, 'what is God's will and purpose.' The reason we need to use inclusive language is not because we want to keep a particular group happy, but because it is necessary to promote justice, reconciliation and love, the agenda to which we Christians have been called.

Because of human sin, we live in a world of division and oppression. Groups which have traditionally exercised control over other groups inevitably and often unconsciously seek to preserve that superior status by denying the same access to power and privilege to others that they themselves enjoy. Such denial may be blatant in the form of discriminatory laws or customs, or it may be hidden but even more potent in the form of oppressive concepts or language. The insidious nature of language which serves to emphasize one group as the norm or standard is that it reinforces that group's primacy and importance every time we think or speak, thus, it becomes automatic or 'natural' to ascribe greater weight to that group. Justice, reconciliation and love demand that we overcome oppression wherever it exists, and we cannot exclude the oppressive structures of our language from this task.

The use of inclusive language does more than overcome a barrier to equal access. It frees us to apprehend and convey the wider truth. Paul urges the Corinthians to widen their hearts that they might fully experience the gospel (II Cor. 6:13). In the same spirit, he might urge us to widen our understanding so that we might better grasp the richness and fullness of God as well as of our own humanity. It is our openness to move beyond comfortable and familiar images that enables us to grow in our relationship with God. The importance of inclusive language is that it serves to liberate everyone.

The task force recommends the following scriptures as helpful in studying inclusive language: Mark 2:27, Luke 11:27-28, 13:34, 15:8-9 (female God images), I Corinthians 8:1-13, 10:14-17 and Galatians 3:27-28, 5:13.

1. *What is inclusiveness?*

Inclusiveness is an attitude or stance of mutuality and openness towards others that recognizes everyone's right of equal access to the experience and realization of wholeness, and it is a commitment to remove barriers between individuals and among communities that deny such access.

2. *What is inclusive language?*

Inclusive language reflects an attitude or stance of mutuality and openness towards others that recognizes everyone's right of equal access to the experience and realization of wholeness.

Inclusive language reflects a sensitivity to overcoming barriers that exist between individuals and among communities in such areas as gender, race, class, age, physical differences, nationality, theological beliefs, culture and lifestyle.

3. *Guidelines for inclusive language regarding gender.*

a. *References to people.*

- i) Use nongendered terms or inclusive gendered terms when referring to all sexes. (e.g. Instead of 'man' or 'mankind', use 'human', 'humanity', 'humankind', 'people', 'all', 'men and women', 'female and male'. Do not use 'brothers in Christ' or 'Sons of God' or 'brotherhood', but 'Christians', 'friends', 'comrades', 'family', 'community', 'people of God', 'children of God' or 'sisters and brothers'.)
- ii) Pronouns should not be of a single gender when referring to all sexes. (e.g. Instead of "A Christian should read his Bible daily" use "Christians should read their Bibles daily" (plural) - "A Christian should read his or her Bible daily" (both sexes) - "A Christian should read their Bible daily" (nonstandard grammar but used increasingly in the vernacular) - "A Christian should read the Bible daily" (drop the pronoun) - "The Bible should be read by Christians" (passive voice).
- iii) Terms for occupations and roles should not refer to one gender. (Do not add diminutives of 'ess' or 'ette', as in 'priestess'. It is a diminutive and demeaning to refer to women or gay men as 'girls'. Do not use 'spokesman' or 'chairman', but 'chairperson' or 'chair'. Do not use 'man the booth' but 'staff the booth'. Forms of address should not call attention to sex, race or nationality, but to the role. (e.g. not 'woman-' or 'gay-' or 'Hispanic-' minister, but 'minister'.)

b. *Inclusive language for God.*

- i) Use nongendered or inclusive gendered terms for God wherever such improvements do not alter the fundamental meaning. If a gendered term is necessary or desirable, terms of the other gender should also be used for balance. (Examples of nongendered terms for God: Creator, Maker, Sovereign, Holy One, Spirit, Lover, Ruler, Guide, Shepherd, Rock, Source of Life, Yahweh, the Almighty, Parent, Friend, Most High.)
- ii) Father images for God should be balanced by Mother images.
- iii) Where possible, replace pronouns with nongendered nouns or use balanced gendered pronouns or words such as 'who', 'whom', 'one' and 'Godself'.

c. *Inclusive language for Jesus the Christ.*

The historical person, Jesus, was male. "The historical fact that Jesus was male affirms not that God chose to become incarnate with masculine characteristics, but that Jesus was truly human as well as truly divine. And because Jesus incorporates the humanity of both men and women, it is appropriate"* . . . to emphasize the full humanity by minimizing the use of male pronouns. (* page 21, *All May Be One: A Guide To Inclusive Church Language*, The Task Force on Women, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, Minneapolis, Minnesota 1979.

- d. The task force recommends as options the use of direct address, adjectives and verbs to replace nouns or pronouns in dealing with inclusive language, carefully considering whether meaning or purpose would be changed. (e.g. "To God be the glory for the things *you* have done.")

4. *Guidelines for inclusive language regarding race.*

If we are indeed going to be an inclusive church, we must acknowledge that we are the products of our past. Incorporated within our Christian religious heritage is a long history of racism (conscious and unconscious). Racism, whether conscious or unconscious, is destructive and must be overcome in order for us to be whole in our Christian faith. So, in keeping with our guideline for inclusivity, we strongly recommend the elimination of racist language, imagery and symbols in references to people, God, Jesus Christ, scripture, hymns, songs, liturgy and contemporary language. For example, we recommend not using language which suggests that white is the preferred color, such as "wash me white as snow", "white pearly gates" and "robes of pure white". We discourage the use of dark colors in liturgical attire to indicate death or mourning and the use of white to indicate joy or life. The best solution is to show that on the authority of the Bible black and darkness can be positive symbols -- symbols of the divine and of goodness.

"The paradox of Christianity is that what is wisdom to reason is foolishness to God, and what seems foolish or irrational to reason is the true wisdom that leads to redemption. The darkness from which reason flees is the true path to truth and being. This is the constant teaching of the scriptures. The greatest redemptive acts in the history of salvation were done at night or in darkness: the first creation, the night of the Exodus, the night of the incarnation, the night of the Last Supper, the night of the Resurrection. There is no other way to life, truth and being but through the positive darkness of Faith." *

(* page 162-3, *The Dark Center: A Process Theology of Blackness*, by Eulalio Baltazar (Paulist Press, New York 1973).

5. *The relation of inclusive language to the life and worship of the church.*

The above guidelines should be applied when reading translations of scripture, in hymns, songs and liturgy, and in contemporary language. Examples of some language to avoid:

White as good and dark as evil.	(racism)
Church as 'she'.	(sexism)
America as best.	(nationalism)
"You did that in a very professional way."	(classism)
"Don't be an Indian-giver."	(classism and culture)
"Speak proper English."	(classism and culture)
"Give of the strength of your youth."	(physical difference and ageism)
"You don't look 35."	(physical difference and ageism)
Unsigned worship, and 'deaf and dumb'.	(physical difference)
"That's not very Christian."	(theological beliefs)
"He's a real man. She's a real woman."	(lifestyle)
"All of us in MCC have been oppressed as gays and lesbians."	(lifestyle)
Satan as male.	(sexism)

6. *Recommendations for Statement of Faith*

UFMCC By-laws, Article III: Doctrine, Sacraments and Rites.

A. Doctrine: Christianity is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and is the religion set forth in the Scriptures. *The Christ is foretold in the Old Testament, presented in the New Testament, and proclaimed by the Christian Church in every age and in every land.*

Founded in the interest of offering a church home to all who confess and believe, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches moves in the mainstream of Christianity.

Our faith is based upon the principles outlined in the historic creeds: Apostles' and Nicene.

We believe:

1. *In one triune God, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, of one substance and of three manifestations, including the Source of our being whom we worship as God - our Parent-Creator; Jesus - God in flesh, human, who was and is eternally with and in God, yet dwelling among us as human, but transcendent as Christ; and the Holy Spirit - God as indwelling and prophetic breath.*
2. That the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, showing forth God to every person through the law and the prophets, and finally, completely and ultimately on earth in the being of Jesus Christ.
3. That Jesus . . . the Christ . . . historically recorded as living some 2,000 years before this writing, *is God incarnate, of human birth, fully God and fully human, and that by being one with the will of God, Jesus has demonstrated once and forever that all people are likewise Children of God, being spiritually made in God's image.*
4. That the Holy Spirit is God making known God's love and interest to all people. The Holy Spirit is God, available to and working through all who are willing to place their welfare in God's keeping.
5. Every person is justified by Grace to God through faith in Jesus Christ.
6. We are saved from loneliness, despair and degradation through God's gift of grace, as was declared by our *Saviour*. Such grace is not earned, but is a pure gift from a God of pure love. We further commend the *community* of the faithful to a life of prayer; to seek genuine forgiveness for unkind, thoughtless and unloving acts; and to a committed life of Christian service.
7. The Church serves to bring all people to God through Christ. To this end, it shall arrange for regular services of worship, prayer, interpretation of the Scriptures, and edification through the teaching and preaching of the Word.

B. Sacraments: This church embraces two holy Sacraments:

1. Baptism by water and the Spirit, as recorded in the Scriptures, shall be a sign of the dedication of each life to God and God's service. Through the words and acts of this sacrament, the recipient is identified as God's own Child.
2. Holy Communion is the partaking of blessed bread and wine in accordance with the *words of Jesus*: "This is my body . . . this is my blood." (Matthew 26:26-28.)
All who believe, confess, repent and seek God's love through Christ, after examining their consciences, may freely participate in the communal meal, signifying their desire to be received into *community with Christ*, to be saved by *Christ's* sacrifice, to participate in *Christ's* resurrection, and to commit their lives anew to *Christ's* service.

7. *Additional recommendations and comments of the task force.*

1. The task force felt keenly the lack of representation from a person whose language is other than English. The guidelines of this commission need to be similarly developed for each of the languages which UFMCC congregations speak.
2. The task force regrets the lack of a native-born Hispanic person at its meeting.
3. The task force did not arrive at agreement on the use of 'Lord', 'Fellowship' and 'Kingdom' and recommends further study and discussion in order to find agreement on how to deal with these terms.
4. The task force recommends that inclusive language be introduced in membership classes of

local congregations as an area of discussion and education.

5. The task force recommends that these guidelines be applied at all levels of the life of UFMCC, both in written, visual and spoken form, on the local, national and international levels.
6. The task force recommends that at all UFMCC functions at the local, national and international level, all participants, to include outside guests, be informed of these guidelines.
7. The task force requests the UFMCC Department of Christian Education to revise and develop materials using these guidelines.
8. The task force recommends that the UFMCC commission a body to provide us with an inclusive scripture that incorporates these guidelines. In the meantime, great care should be taken in applying these guidelines to scripture.
9. The task force recommends to the Ministerial Credentials and Affairs Committee that in evaluating ministers it include an opportunity for the candidates to demonstrate their readiness to use inclusive language.
10. The task force recommends that these guidelines be applied to the work of the Hymnody Committee.
11. The following Doxology and Gloria are recommended to UFMCC and should also be included in the new hymnal:

Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Jesus Christ and in God grow;
Praise to the Holy Spirit give,
That we in love with God may live.

Gloria: Glory be to the One God, (Creator)
And to the Christ,
And to the Holy Ghost, (Comforter)
As it was in the beginning,
Is now and ever shall be,
World without end.
Amen.

12. The task force recommends that UFMCC use the name of the month and day in giving dates, since order varies among countries when only numerals are used (eg. 6/2/80 can be June 2 or February 6). Also, seasonal references should be eliminated, and months used instead (eg. not 'Fall Session' but 'September Session').
13. The task force recommends to the UFMCC production of a packet and study guide for use in studying inclusive language, (materials to be supplied by the task force).

The work of this task force is but one step in an ongoing process. The issue is not dead nor resolved. A step has been taken.

Respectfully submitted:

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Rev. Edward Hougen, MCC Boston, MA, USA.
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Appendixes: "What do the Synoptics Say?: The Sexuality of Jesus." Rosemary Ruether, *Christianity and Crisis*, May 29, 1978.

"God: An Inclusive Trinity." Jeffrey D. Pulling, UFMCC, Samaritan Theological Institute, Los Angeles, California, 1977.

What Do The Synoptics Say?

THE SEXUALITY OF JESUS

By Rosemary Ruether

In asking the question of the norms of a moral life, a life compatible with the quest for the Kingdom of God, Christians are wont to turn to the example of Jesus, to ask what norm is found in his life and teachings. But even to ask this question about sexuality is difficult. To ask about the sexuality of Jesus is for most Christians to border on blasphemy. Even for Protestants the basic image of Jesus is that of sexlessness. Jesus is the pure one, the holy one, the sinless one. Therefore all questions about his sexuality are taboo. Sexuality and holiness are incompatible. This is still the basic view of Jesus in all Christian circles, whether they have a celibate ideal or not.

For Christians of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, this model of the sexlessness of Jesus is very explicit. Celibacy here is still regarded as the higher Christian ideal, the life style which anticipates the eschatological order where there will be "neither marrying or giving in marriage" - the "angelic life" as the Church Fathers would have called it. Marriage is an inferior option in the Christian era. For many Church Fathers, such as Jerome and Augustine, all sexual relations, even procreative relations within lawful marriage, are venially sinful because of the lust that accompanies sex.

But even if all sex is not seen as sinful, it belongs to the lesser world of mutability and death. It represents the very heart of that world of birth and decay, of mortality, from which we have been freed by the Resurrection and the new life in Christ. The committed Christian signals that redemption from mortality by choosing the celibate life. Obviously Jesus cannot be a lesser role model for the eschatological life that he bestows on others. He must be not only celibate, but freed from all sexual desire from his very beginnings. Born of a virgin without the accompaniment of sinful lust, he alone is "naturally" what others strive to be through discipline; the sexless man, freed of all sexual libido. This is the point of view that lies behind the traditional "sexless" picture of Jesus.

How well does this picture of Jesus the celibate accord with the gospels? In traditions such as the virgin birth this ideal has already been, to some extent, incorporated into the Synoptic picture. But in the most historical layers of the Synoptics, this ideal is not confirmed. Jesus never talks about sexuality as though it were the heart of the sin from which we must be freed. On the contrary, the sins he condemns have more to do with pride, arrogance, avarice and faithlessness - the sins of religious hypocrisy, the sins of the powerful among the religious and economic elite against the little ones - the despising of widows and orphans, the religious fetishism that hates the unwashed and the outsider.

In criticizing these kinds of sins, Jesus in the Synoptic tradition is notable in his sympathy for the prostitute, for that class of woman whom society uses and shuns as the example of sexual sinfulness. Both the Old Testament and the later Christian tradition uses harlotry as a key expression of sinfulness and apostasy. In contrast, Jesus and the Synoptics seem to regard sexual fallenness mildly. Harlotry does not put one as far away from the Kingdom of God as religious hypocrisy. The harlot may well be the first to hear the gospel, to have true faithfulness to Jesus, in contrast to the religious rigorist, who cannot hear the message.

This is not a question of condoning harlotry as such. It is an expression of Jesus' social and religious iconoclasm. Jesus suggests that the sins of those whom society condemns as sinners may shut people less to the Word of God than the pride of the righteous. In the words of Matthew 21:31: "Truly I say to you, the tax collectors and harlots will go into the Kingdom of God before you" [the righteous]. To put it in modern language, the prostitutes and bookies will go into the Kingdom of God ahead of the clerics and the theologians.

THE NON-ASCETIC JESUS

In many passages of the Synoptics Jesus is portrayed in ways that we might characterize as anti-ascetic. He sits at a table with sinners (Matthew 9:10-14; Mark 2:15-18; Luke 5:29-33). The sinful woman (presumably a prostitute) is held up to the Pharisee as a model of love and repentance. In contrast to John and his disciples, who practiced the ascetic discipline of fasting in the desert, Jesus lives in towns, in the habitations of friends. He does not fast, but eats and drinks (not grape juice). This period of Jesus' life anticipates redemption in which it is appropriate to feast, not to fast. "The Son of Man comes eating and drinking, and they say, behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matthew 11:18; Luke 7:34).

This anti-ascetic image of Jesus of the gospels has caused some modern writers to reject the whole tradition that Jesus was a celibate. Instead they suggest that Jesus, following the normal Jewish customs, was probably married. William Phipps, in his book *Was Jesus Married?* is the most outspoken representa-

tive of this view. Phipps argues that a person so notably unascetic, a person who obviously enjoyed parties, including weddings, must have followed the normal life style that was regarded as a necessary part of being a good Jew according to the Law; namely, to marry at an early age. The fact that Jesus' wife is never mentioned should cause no problems. She might just have been staying home with the family in Nazareth. Since no children are mentioned, maybe she was infertile, or dead, when Jesus engaged in his public ministry.

All this is possible. But to argue that Jesus must have been married, and then to have to come up with an unmentioned, absent, infertile and possibly dead wife is not much of an argument on the other side either! One suspects that there is more going on here, in Phipps' argument, than meets the eye. Just as the Catholic tradition wishes to make Jesus the norm for its celibate ministry. Phipps wishes to make Jesus the norm for the Protestant married ministry. A more startling and difficult problem for both of these traditions is that Jesus does not fit either model. He appears to be *neither married nor celibate!*

Now to suggest that Jesus was neither celibate (ascetic) nor married is a dangerous idea, for it opens up the possibility that Jesus' sexuality was not channeled in either of these two acceptable directions. People who are neither married nor celibate in our society are "bachelors," perhaps even "swingers," heterosexual or homosexual. They have sexual friendships outside of marriage. What evidence is there that Jesus was such a person? There is, of course, considerable evidence that Jesus had close female friends. Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany, along with her sister Martha, are particularly recorded as close female friends of Jesus. Phipps tries to finesse this issue by suggesting that maybe Jesus was married to one or another of them (before going on to his hypothesis of the absent, sterile, dead wife).

But this will not wash. Jesus was not married to either Mary, but he was close friends with them. The Jewish tradition strictly tabooed friendship between men and women who were not married. An observant Jew should not even look at nor speak to a woman who was not his wife (and he shouldn't spend too much time speaking even with his wife). This tradition is part of the reason for the surprise of the disciples when they happened upon Jesus engaged in close conversation with the Samaritan woman (aside from her outcast status as a Samaritan and a much-married one at that).

Jesus shows no evidence of having heard any such prohibitions. Moreover, his friendship with these women is a friendship with them, not a friendship mediated through males of their family. The friendship with Mary of Bethany is in the context of their household. But the sisters appear to be in charge, With the brother mentioned as a dependent, background figure.

The friendship with Mary Magdalene is outside the context of any family. Although there is actually no New Testament confirmation of the tradition that Mary Magdalene was a former prostitute (this comes from unsupported identification of Magdalene with the woman of Luke 7:36-50). Mary Magdalene was a disturbing figure in the church tradition. She was a "loose" woman, at least in the sense of being defined by no family context whatsoever. She appears "on the road" with Jesus as his disciple and friend. It is said that he cured her of seven devils, although there is not reason to interpret this as references to a former life of prostitution. Following the general Synoptic traditions, being cured of devils refers most probably to some kind of sickness or epilepsy, which people at that time interpreted as being "possessed."

THE TOUCHABLE JESUS

The special friendship of Jesus with Mary Magdalene is evident at many points in the Synoptic story. She is the leader of the women disciples who remain faithful to him at the cross and are the first witnesses to the resurrection in all four gospel accounts. Her special relationship is particularly stressed in John's resurrection story, when Jesus makes a special appearance to her. She starts to embrace him, but he counsels her not to touch him because he is in a special state of supercharged power, resurrected, but not yet ascended. Hence it might be dangerous to touch him. Contrary to the way this text is often interpreted to suggest that Jesus would never have allowed a woman to embrace him, its evident meaning is that Mary was accustomed to embrace him, and so spontaneously moved to do so at this time. He cautions her not to do so only because of his special condition. Instead he charges her with the mission of announcing his resurrection to the rest of the disciples.

It is interesting that the Gnostics particularly picked up on this tradition of the Magdalene as the special disciple and beloved of Jesus. She was the disciple to the disciples, who was given a special closeness to the Lord and understanding of his message, which she then was to interpret to the others. The male disciples, especially Peter, are portrayed as resenting this special favor given to a woman in preference over themselves. Mary's role is affirmed as a way of castigating religious male chauvinism and upholding the equality of women, in the Gnostic Christian communities.

Jesus is even portrayed as having a special love relationship with Mary Magdalene. She is his beloved disciple. She understands him better than the others, and he responds to her with physical caresses.

The Gospel of Philip refers to Mary as Jesus' "spouse," and says "Jesus loved Mary more than the other disciples and kissed her many times on the mouth" (55). Phipps again misinterprets this to mean that the Gospel of Philip believes that Jesus and Mary were married "in the normal Jewish tradition." But the Gnostic communities, represented by this gospel, believed in a nuptial union of their members that reconciled the spiritual division of maleness and femaleness, but in some way that was a sublimation of it outside or beyond marriage. The love relationship of Mary and Jesus is probably intended to make them a model of this Gnostic "sacrament of the bridal chamber."

The scandal attaching to these Gnostic ideas clearly indicates that they espoused some kind of love relations that were not, in fact, marriage as conventionally understood. It is hard to know exactly what the Gnostics were doing - whether they understood this nuptial union as a sublimated platonic love, or actually practiced a sexual union that was not intended to be procreative. But the scandal created by Gnostic experimentation with new models of male-female relations, using the relationship of Jesus and the Magdalene as the model, is probably part of the reason for the mainstream church's suppression of any authority attached to Mary Magdalene. She comes to be portrayed as a repentant sinner, weeping at his feet, instead of a close friend and disciple, accustomed to embracing him, and to whom he entrusted the mission of the Gospel to the other disciples.

The orthodox tradition portrays Jesus as having another special disciple, who is called the "beloved disciple," and with whom Jesus had a special relation of love that included physical touching. This is the disciple John, who is repeatedly referred to as the one who laid his head on Jesus' breast (John 13:23-25). Christian iconography has continued this tradition by depicting the Last Supper with John seated next to Jesus, leaning his head on his breast.

Surely no idea is more disturbing to most Christians than the suggestion that Jesus might have been homosexual (or, if we take the Magdalene tradition into account, bisexual!). But there is much in the model of Jesus in the New Testament and later tradition which makes him decidedly a male who was, if not unmasculine, at least iconoclastic toward male models of power and authority. Recent Christian tradition, especially pietist Christianity, has had a tendency to depict Jesus as having feminine, rather than masculine, attributes. He is seen as gentle, peace-loving, nurturing, rather than judgmental. The feminine Jesus has its social roots in a domesticated Christianity which is identified primarily with the home and women, rather than the male public sphere of war and politics. A society that identifies religion and the clergy with feminine attributes and, at the same time, severely taboos feminine attributes for males and projects this taboo toward the feminine upon male homosexuals, clearly is in trouble with its religious model. It is no surprise that the secret dread of middle-class Christianity, specifically Protestant, but in a somewhat different way Catholic also, is clerical homosexuality.

THE FEMINIZED JESUS

It would be a mistake to project this model of the feminine Jesus back upon the synoptic picture. It is largely a creation of false sex stereotyping of males and females, in terms of opposite psychological attributes. The false stereotyping of male homosexuals as "effeminate" is also a part of this anti-female, homophobic sexual pathology. The striking fact about the Synoptics is the lack of such sex stereotyping. Jesus can be harsh, angry, judgmental and even violent in his condemnation of oppressive power. Jesus is not so much "feminine" or "masculine" as he is a figure that defies all such sex stereotyping. Although authoritative, he is authoritative in an iconoclastic way. "He speaks with authority, not as the scribes and the Pharisees." His is an authority that overthrows conventional models of patriarchal, hierarchal, religious and political power systems; that champions women, the poor, the unwashed and outcasts, that rejects the power games of the male leadership classes.

Included in this iconoclasm through conventional male power relations, Jesus specifically disassociated the church from the family. Since later New Testament and Christian tradition closely identified the church and the family (specifically the patriarchal family), following the Jewish tradition, this tension between the church and the family is all the more notable in the Synoptics. The church is seen as a voluntary community of adult men and women who are called out of their normal social contexts, including their families, by discipleship to Jesus.

Discipleship takes place at the crisis point of history, where people must be ready to abandon their conventional concerns for security and family ties for a community of radical obedience. Repeatedly it is said that discipleship to Christ will set parent against child, child against parent, brother against brother. Those who would follow Jesus must be prepared to set aside family ties. This has nothing to do with celibacy. There is no suggestion that people should not have been married or have children, but that these ties might have to be set aside for the more important loyalty to Christ. The emphasis is on the church as a community of crisis, not a settled, withdrawn society of monks. The setting aside of family ties in the Synoptics is more like the sort of thing that happened during the civil rights movement, when parents and children fell into conflict and were estranged over what was right, and wives left husbands and children to go down into the march, perhaps even to risk death.

This community, drawn together out of recognition of the crisis of the times and discipleship to Jesus, is a new kind of community. The conventional family and societal models of domination and subordination no longer apply. All are drawn together as persons outside of their social contexts, each responding to the call. In one dramatic passage the family of Jesus is contrasted with the new relations of his followers and supporters. The mother and brothers of Jesus come to persuade him to come home. Jesus replies by saying, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers and sisters?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and brothers and sisters" (Matthew 12:48; Mark 3:34; Luke 8:21).

In the Synoptics, although Jesus is not an ascetic, there is no reinforcement of the integration of the church and the family. On the contrary, the two stand in tension with each other. Those who come into the church gather into a new community outside of the married and family patterns of society.

Where does all this leave us, as far as deriving norms of sexuality from the example of Jesus? Basically what it suggests to me is that there is not one normative pattern of sexuality to be drawn from the example of Jesus. Jesus was not an ascetic; several of the disciples were apparently married and there is not the slightest suggestion that the leadership of the church was intended to be a celibate elite. On the other hand, one cannot sanctify the married pattern as the normative pattern for the church and its leadership from Jesus' life either. In many ways the very concept of the church of the Synoptics is that of a fellowship of equals, a community of risk, that is not integrated into the married patterns of society. Jesus' life shows close special friendships with both men and women that included physical tenderness. On the other hand, there is nothing to suggest how sexual these relationships were. In contrast to the later tradition and its obsession with sexual purity, the Synoptic tradition is not particularly interested in the question of sexuality. It is not the avenue of self-realization. Neither is it the biggest sin in the world. Much bigger and more important sins, like legalistic hypocrisy, bar people from the Gospel.

JESUS AS FRIEND

It is precisely in this intermediate space, between the various options we have discussed in this essay, that I would find the most appropriate message of the Gospel on sexuality. Jesus' life gives no exclusive sanctification to a particular sexual life style, whether celibate or married, hetero or homosexual, as the normative model for Christians. On the other hand, there are aspects that are open to all of these options. None of these options is enshrined. None is ruled out as irretrievably contrary to the Gospel. Most of all, the Synoptic world is not a world obsessed with sexuality, either in the darkest sin or as the path of fulfillment.

If there is anything at all to be said about the sexuality of Jesus it is that it was a sexuality under the control of friendship. He could love both John and Mary Magdalene, physically embrace and be embraced by them, because first of all he knew them as friends, not as sexual objects. Even his disciples finally he wishes to know no longer as disciples, but as friends. If our models of sexuality are disruptive and frightening, it is primarily because they are not friendships, but are exploitative reductions to sexual objectification. Jesus, on the other hand, appears to be a person unperturbed by sexuality because he relates to both men and women first of all as friends. In a church racked by fears of sexuality, its own and that of other people, this is indeed the message that we most need to hear from the life of Jesus; a person who sets up no sexual life style as superior or normative for the ministry or the church, either marriage or celibacy, hetero- or homosexuality; a person who can be intimate and tender with men and women, but most of all a person freed from obsession with the sexual as sexual, because his relationships were controlled not by sexuality, but by friendship.

GOD: AN INCLUSIVE TRINITY

**By the Reverend Jeffrey D. Pulling
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1977

There is much concern in the Metropolitan Community Churches and in other Christian churches today about how we are to refer to and talk about the Trinity. This is not new; there has always been much disagreement and discussion in Christianity as to whether God is tri-une (three-in-one), and if so, how. The Trinitarian understanding of God was not formulated and accepted as doctrine until the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. Ever since then the debate has continued: How can God be both three and one? Are we talking about three separate beings that together make up God, or are we referring to one God known in three roles, or what? Obviously questions such as these are central to the Christian faith. If the answer that the Church gives is the Trinity, then it must be a meaningful, understandable and true answer. For most Christians, however, the Trinity is a mystery and something to be accepted on faith.

That which has brought the Trinitarian question to a head in Metropolitan Community Churches is feminism. The ancient, traditional formula for expressing the Trinity is, of course, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The term "Father" for God is not acceptable to feminists, who tell us that God is not male but beyond gender. Feminists ask us for non-sexist terminology for God. We will look at some examples of this in this paper. The resulting language, however, has been unacceptable to many, because it does not accurately and adequately express God as Trinity. The feminist issue has made us look at and re-examine the Trinity. Just what do we mean by the three-person formula? How do we restate it and reformulate it in other words? Are there any other adequate terms? That which was a sociological/moral issue for us (feminism and sexist language) has also become a theological issue. We have been forced to really look at the doctrine of the Trinity and to determine what it means for us today.

Sexism is still the precipitating factor in this theological controversy of the Trinity, but we have also moved beyond that. We now see that there are other problems with the present, traditional formula of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit." I propose that we look at these problems and determine from them the criteria for restating the doctrine.

I. The first problem is that the present formulating of the doctrine of the Trinity states that there are three "persons" who make up one "Godhead." This has been confusing for many Christians, not to mention outsiders to the faith. The problem is the word "person" itself. When we use this word today, we are usually referring to a single, independent, autonomous human being. We use the word "personality," that which is unique about and characterizes an individual person. When we apply this understanding of "person" to the Trinity, we end up with a mental picture of three divine beings, separate but related, each with their role(s) and function(s). Many people have rejected orthodox Christianity because they want to affirm one God and one God only, and they could not "buy into" the three-in-one explanation.

Church historians and language scholars tell us, however, that our present problem with the word "person" is a cultural and time-bound problem. When our ancestors in the faith used this word to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity, they did not have the same understanding of it as we do today. The word they used back in the fourth century was "persona" (from the Latin), which was derived from the masks that actors wore in the theatre to designate the character or role they were playing. Thus their three-person formula did not mean three distinct beings but one God who played three distinct roles or who assumed three modes.

Thus the language that we use to describe the tri-une God must make clear that there is one God, not three divine beings. God is a unity, and any language that suggests other than that is not helpful or accurate. If our terminology suggests that there is a hierarchy in the Godhead with one "person" over another or before another, we are destroying the oneness and unity of God.

II. The second problem with the present formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is that the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" formula does not adequately explain the meaning of the tri-une God for us today. We must use language that is true to the original meaning of the doctrine. We must use language that expresses the truth that our ancestors in the faith tried to express. What is meant by the Trinity? Gordon Kaufman, in his *Systematic Theology: A historic perspective*, states that the truth of the three-person formula is that there is one God, who is transcendent, who was revealed in the particular human person Jesus, and who is present and active now and in all history. I think that most of us Christians basically agree that this is our understanding of God according to the Scriptures, Christian tradition, and our own experience. We do want to affirm that it is one and the same God who is transcendent (beyond us), who is revealed to us definitively in Jesus, and who is always with us. I do not think, however, that the traditional formula of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" does an adequate job of stating this meaning. For most people now this traditional formula is just some sacred words that have to be explained if they are to have any meaning for the hearers. The doctrine of the Trinity was developed by human Christians to try to explain their understanding of God. The doctrine was not developed to be a mystery or a stumbling-block to faith, but to elucidate, to state clearly what our faith is. It is tragic that the doctrine of the Trinity no longer does this for most Christians. We must use language

that accurately reflects what we believe and that is clear to everyone.

III. The third problem with the present formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is that the word "Father" in the Trinitarian formula does not mean the same thing as the name "Father" which Jesus used for God. If we believe that Jesus is the clearest and most definitive revelation of God, then we must take seriously what Jesus taught about God. The image of "Father" in both traditional and current Trinitarian thinking points to God as transcendent or beyond us, who is a mystery, who created the universe and sustains it, who is Lord and Ruler of nature and history, etc. This is certainly an aspect of God, but this is not what Jesus meant by "Father." Jesus did not deny God as Creator and as All-powerful Ruler and Judge; he often referred to "the Lord of heaven and earth." Jesus also, however, balanced this awesome, transcendent God with the God who is our loving Father.

Jesus taught that God can be known and can be related to. This awesome God who brought us into being, who has charge of our destiny, who is far beyond us and who is far greater than we can ever conceive, is also near and loving. "Father" was Jesus' characteristic way of referring to God. It was not uncommon in the Jewish religion to refer to God as "Father," but Jesus used the term more frequently than the other rabbis, and moreover he endowed it with a more intimate meaning. When Jesus called God "Father," he was not referring to God as transcendent. Rather he was emphasizing the closeness and loving intimacy of God. In fact Jesus did not use the formal word for "Father" like his fellow rabbis did. Rather he used the simple Aramaic word "Abba" to address God (Mark 14:36; Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21; Luke 11:11). This was a very informal, intimate term and was what Jewish children might call their father in the home. The only thing close to it that we have in common usage is "Daddy." Jesus shocked his contemporaries by talking about God in such an informal, direct and personal way.

One of the main ideas that Jesus tried to communicate is that the love of God for us is like the love of our parents for us. God feeds and clothes us (Matthew 6:25-33; Luke 12:22-31). God listens to us and provides for us. Gifts come to us from God just as human parents give gifts to their children (Matthew 7:7-12; Luke 11:9-13). God, of course, surpasses all humans in goodness and mercy, and consequently God's love for us is greater than any which our earthly parents could give us. The image of a parent, however, is still helpful. We can approach God as children go to their parents whether in happiness, anxiety, fear, or sorrow. God cares for us more than our own parents do, even when we are undeserving. Moreover, God, like a good parent, is concerned about our welfare, our nurture and our growth. When we call God "Father," "Mother," or "Parent," what we really mean is that GOD CARES!

When Jesus referred to God as our loving Father he meant that God is a personal God, and should not be addressed in abstract, impersonal terms like "creative process," "the Absolute," "the Sovereign Other," etc., but as our heavenly Parent.

This parent image shapes our understanding of God as the transcendent Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Jesus referred to God's creating and sustaining activities several times (Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19; Matthew 5:45), but not in the sense of a distant, unconcerned God who set things in motion but is not involved anymore. On the contrary, the God that Jesus proclaimed was always present and active in the world. Jesus saw God everywhere in the actual physical world taking care of every plant and creature no matter how small or insignificant (Matthew 5:25-33; Matthew 10:29-30; Luke 12:6-7, 22-31). God continues to provide the daily needs of humankind; in fact Jesus taught his followers to pray for their daily bread (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3). Jesus himself gave thanks to God at the beginning of every meal. Jesus did not concern himself with speculating about the metaphysical attributes of God. The faith in God that he preached was a very practical faith, one that had to do with the everyday lives and needs of people.

Another aspect of using a parent image for God is that God actively loves us. Jesus taught that God has infinite patience and love and is always trying to get through to us. In Luke 15 there are three parables that Jesus told to illustrate this characteristic of God. In these parables God is presented as loving us actively and tirelessly, and seeking us out. This is one of the unique things that Jesus taught about God: that God takes the initiative and seeks us out. No other religion, including Judaism, teaches that. Other religions invariably present God as sitting back, waiting for people to come up to the divine throne, demanding that they measure up to certain standards before they can commune with God. Jesus said, no, God is not like that; God wants us and God goes out to get us. Like the shepherd and the housewife, God hunts us until we are found. Like the father of the prodigal son, God is anxiously on the lookout waiting breathlessly for us to come home. Moreover, God wants to forgive us and erase all past differences. God wants to give us a fresh start because God loves us, but God will not force God's self upon us. We must reciprocate God's advances to us; we must receive God's forgiveness of us if it is going to have any meaning in our lives.

Thus through the image of "Father," Jesus taught that God is like a parent to us, always close and loving, showing continuing concern and care, providing for our needs, actively seeking us out when we wander off or get in trouble, and forgiving us so that we can start anew.

In addition to being a loving Father, however, God is also the Lord of heaven and earth, according to the teaching of Jesus. In the Lord's Prayer the words "Our Father" are immediately followed by

"who art in heaven." Jesus, when talking to God personally, called God "Abba" or "Father," but when he was talking to others about God, he typically balanced the image of Father with the words "who is in heaven," or "heavenly," or "Lord of heaven and earth" (Matthew 6:1; Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). God is not only our parent but also the ruler of the heavens and the earth. God is not only the creator and sustainer of us personally, but of all the universe. God is not limited to the creation; God transcends it. The Creator is not subject to the creation but is in charge over it. To say that God is "in heaven" or is "heavenly" is not to restrict God's location and activity. Rather it is to acknowledge that God is not restricted by any limits of time and space of which we can conceive. God is present and active in the world, but God is not limited to and by the world. God is ultimately mystery and beyond us. God is other, holy, awesome (Matthew 5:35; Matthew 23:22; Matthew 26:53; Luke 12:5). God is the Most High, the Holy One, the one to whom all majesty and glory belong. God is transcendent above all that is human and finite.

Thus Jesus taught that God is *both* the Parent of humanity *and* the Lord of heaven and earth. God's relationship to us is so close that it can be described in terms of family life, but God is also vastly more than we can even think. God is close to us and cares about us, but God transcends us. God is both with us and beyond us.

If we use the image of "Father" or "Parent" for God as Jesus did, then we cannot use this as the first person of the Trinity. Jesus' concept of God as "Father" was Trinitarian: the transcendent God is revealed in Jesus to be close, loving, forgiving, active and always present. Jesus' concept of God thus takes into account the three-foldness of God, and not just "God the Father" as depicted in traditional Trinitarian theology.

IV. The fourth problem with the present formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is that it depicts God as male, whereas Jesus presented God as beyond gender. At this point the reader probably thinks that I have either taken leave of my senses or that my mind has been so distorted by feminism that I cannot read the Bible straight anymore. Let me assure you, however, that I do know of what I write, and I will back it up. It is true that Jesus' characteristic and most common image for God was "Father," and that does seem to suggest a male God doing masculine things. We have already seen, however, in section 3 that Jesus transformed the image of "Father" when referring to God. He continued to use this male term for God which was popular and well accepted in Judaism, but he gave it new and added meaning.

Jesus changed the picture of God from an aloof, stern, cold, demanding, distant Father to a close, loving, forgiving Father. In doing so, he ascribed many "feminine" and "motherly" qualities to God. Jesus described God as feeding, clothing, nurturing, supporting, and comforting us. In Biblical times these things were definitely aspects of the "motherly" role, not the "fatherly" role. What Jesus was obviously trying to communicate was that the love and ongoing concern of God for us is like the love and ongoing concern of our parents (both of our parents). God is our Father *and* Mother, or more simply God is our heavenly Parent. Apparently Jesus did not dare use the term "Mother" for God for fear of alienating and losing even his closest friends, but he did do much to break the traditional stereotypes of a male God. Moreover, in one of his parables, he actually compares God to a woman, which was a revolutionary idea! In Luke 15:8-10, he compared God to a woman who tears her house upside down until she finds a lost coin. In the same way God is persistent in seeking us out.

In addition to his gender-less teaching about God, Jesus achieved an androgynous image for himself. Even though he was biologically male, he was not afraid to express his "feminine" side. Jesus defied the masculine image of his day; he was compassionate, healing and forgiving (as God is), and he taught that others should be likewise. Jesus once even referred to himself as a mother hen (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35); he wished to gather the people of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. Jesus was not afraid to refer to God and himself using female as well as male images. His masculinity was not threatened by this. Jesus was not one to put down women and womanly things. Unlike other men of his time, he associated with women in public, talked with them about important matters and treated them with respect.

If Jesus is indeed "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), then we must take seriously the androgynous picture that he presented of himself, which must then reflect God. As a matter of fact the apostle Paul and all four of the gospel writers were so impressed by the androgynous character of Jesus that they never referred to him as "andros" (Greek for "adult male"), but always as "anthropos" (Greek for "human being" or "person"). Jesus was the representative human, the first-fruits and pioneer of the new humanity. Jesus was male, but his maleness was incidental; it was not emphasized at all. It was his humanity that was important. Thus, whatever words we use to express the Trinity must take into account the genderless nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

V. The fifth problem with the present formulation of the Trinity is that it uses one and only one formula (namely, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit") to name and describe God, whereas the Bible presents

a huge variety of names, images and terms for God. Why do we use just "Father" when the Scriptures give us a much richer and fuller picture of God?

First, there is the holy name of God revealed to Moses and to Israel. This name is, of course, "Yahweh" (the more familiar "Jehova" is an anglicized form). God's revelation of this name first took place to Moses on Mount Sinai. Read Exodus 3:1-15. It is pointed out here that "Yahweh" comes from the verb "to be," and that the name "Yahweh" means "I am who I am" or "I am what I am," or it can have a future meaning, "I will be what I will be." Some Biblical scholars think that it might have a causal meaning, like "I cause to be what I cause to be." Whatever the exact meaning, if there is one, it is fascinating and important that the name of God would be a verb form, and the verb "to be" at that. Think for a moment of God as a verb instead of as a noun. Think of God as Being itself rather than as a being. "Yahweh" is a very common name for God in the Old Testament. Everywhere in the Old Testament where you find the words "the LORD" in capital letters, the actual word in the Hebrew text is "Yahweh."

If we look next at Exodus 6:2-3, we read that God wants to be known from then on as Yahweh, but that God was not known by that name to the ancestors of Israel: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To them God appeared as "El Shaddai" which is usually translated "God Almighty." The Hebrew word "El" means "God" or "god." In the Old Testament it most commonly appears in the plural form "Elohim," (either masculine or feminine) which was another very common name for Israel's God. In the Old Testament where the word "GOD" appears in capital letters, the Hebrew word behind it is usually "Elohim." "El" or "Elohim" signifies the Mighty One, the God who creates, conquers and destroys, the One who is awesome and terrifying.

The words "El Shaddai" are usually translated "God Almighty," but many scholars think that it is redundant to translate "Shaddai" as "Almighty" because that idea is already contained in "El." Debate has been carried on among Hebrew scholars as to where "Shaddai" comes from. Some say it is derived from "Shadad" which means to devastate with terrible power, but the name "El Shaddai" is not connected with war or destruction. Other scholars say that "Shaddai" comes from "Shadu" which means mountain. In this view "El Shaddai" would mean "God of the mountain(s)," but the name is not used in connection with any mountain locale (as the name "Yahweh" is connected with Mt. Sinai). The third possibility of the root word for "Shaddai" is the simple "shad" which means woman's breast, pap or teat. When this is applied to God, it would mean "God the Breastfed One" or "God with the Teats." This implies of course the motherly love of God, and this interpretation of the name is the only one that stands the test of Scripture. The name "El Shaddai" is used exclusively in circumstances in which God is pictured as tender, kind, comforting, providing, satisfying, consoling. It is always used in connection with God taking care of his/her people. The people of Israel receive sustenance and consolation from the bosom of El Shaddai. This feminine name for God has been all but wiped out, but we would do well to recover it.

Thus Jesus was not alone in pointing to the feminine side of God. There are several occurrences in the Old Testament in which God is described as feminine or as like a woman. The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 depicts Yahweh as like a mother eagle who stirs up the nest so that her young will leave the nest and learn to fly with her assistance and support (verses 10-12). The same song refers to "the God who gave you birth" (32:18). Psalm 131 is a short psalm which says that being calmed and quieted by God is like being a child at the mother's breast. The prophets were very daring in their imagery of God. They dared to open themselves up to God, and thus they were able to go beyond the popularly-believed notion of their day of a male God. Hosea (11:1-4) describes Yahweh as a mother bringing up the people of Israel, feeding them, bending down to them, teaching them to walk. Hosea (13:8) also compared Yahweh to a she-bear robbed of her cubs. Deutero-Isaiah (the theoretical author of Isaiah 40-55) repeatedly pictures Yahweh as a woman in labor, giving birth, and breast-feeding her child (Isaiah 42:1-4; 46:3-4; 49:14-15). The third part of Isaiah refers to God comforting the inhabitants of Jerusalem as a mother comforts her children (66:13). These feminine references to God have been overlooked and dismissed by those who can only imagine God as male, but they stand in the Scriptures to remind us that God is beyond our imaginings and projections, and that God is beyond gender.

There are other titles for God in the Old Testament, such as "The Most High" (God as transcendent and over all) and "The Lord of hosts" (God as in charge of both heavenly forces and earthly people).

There are several images and terms that are applied to God throughout the Bible. They include shepherd, fortress, rock, captain, general, deliverer, liberator, judge, spouse, suitor, friend, potter, King, ruler, father, mother, parent, light and love. They are all human analogies and images that we humans use to describe God so to say what God is like. That is the point, however. God may be *like* these things, but God cannot be contained in any one of these images, or even in all of them put together. God is much vaster than we can ever imagine, and God cannot and will not be restricted by any word that we attach to the Deity. It is idolatrous and wrong to use just one term or phrase to definitively portray God, because God transcends our human words. We can say that God is *like* such-and-such, but

we cannot nail God down and say God is such-and-such and always will be. We must remember that God is ultimately mystery. We can only know God and talk about God because God has revealed himself/herself.

The complexity of the tri-une God cannot be contained in any single formula like "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Whatever words we use to describe the Trinity must be flexible and open-ended, as well as specific enough to express the truth.

So we have these five problems with the traditional formula "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit":

1. There is confusion and misunderstanding about three "persons" making up one God.
2. The language does not adequately convey the meaning of the Trinity to us today.
3. The word "Father" in the Trinitarian formula does not mean the same thing as the "Father" image Jesus presented of God.
4. The words "Father" and "Son" depict God as male, whereas Jesus presented God as beyond gender.
5. The formula is used as the definitive description of God, whereas God cannot be contained in these words and whereas the Bible recognizing this, offers a great variety of names, images, terms and analogies for God.

Corresponding with these five problems then are five criteria that we must use when reformulating or restating the Trinity:

1. The language we use must make it clear that there is one God, not three divine beings.
2. The language we use must clearly state what we want to affirm about the Trinity: that there is one God, who is transcendent, who was revealed in the particular human person Jesus, and who is present and active now and in all history.
3. The language we use must take into account what Jesus taught about God: that God is both a close and loving Parent and the awesome, transcendent Lord of heaven and earth.
4. The language we use must reflect the genderless nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.
5. The language we use must be open and inclusive in order to reflect our boundless God, and we must never try to restrict God to our limited images and words.

Given these criteria, let us move on to examine some proposed solutions to the wording of the Trinitarian formula.

One formula often used is "Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit." There are three problems with this. First, God as "the Father" (as the transcendent Lord) is more than Creator of the universe. The transcendent God is also the sustainer of the universe, and its Ruler, Lord, and Judge. "Creator" does not entail everything that has been meant by "God the Father." Second, the creative activity of God is not limited to the first person. Whatever God does is done by all of the Godhead. John 1 specifically states that God created through the Word (the Son of God), and the first creation account in Genesis 1 speaks of the Spirit of God hovering above the waters. Third, it does not make much sense to keep the "Son" image for the second person of the Godhead when "Father" or "Parent" is not used for the first person. There can be no child without a parent, and thus the analogy of a father begetting a son is broken. If we change the wording of one, we must change the other one also. Otherwise, we have a mixed metaphor that does not have much meaning.

Another proposed solution is to use the formula "Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier (or Sustainer)." This functional or role approach is a move in the right direction, but it too is inadequate because it specifies one role per person in the Godhead, whereas the whole God is involved in all three activities and in many others.

Some people want to use "the Lord" or "God" for the first person of the Trinity, or even the proper name "Yahweh" (or "Jehova"). It may be valuable to recover this open-ended and mind-expanding Hebrew name, but it is incorrect to identify God with only the first person of the Trinity. If we do that, we deny that it was really God who was revealed in the historical person Jesus, and we deny that it is really God who is present and active among us now. God (or "the Lord" or "Yahweh") is all three persons; that is the meaning of the Trinity.

Some people use the words "Jesus Christ" for the second person of the Trinity. There are problems with this, too. First, how do we get from "the Son of God" to "God the Son?" Many people make this jump easily, but how do we do it? What is the rationale for doing it? This is not to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, but, on the other hand, we must not forget his humanity as well. The Church has affirmed that Jesus Christ is fully human as well as fully divine (true God and true human). Thus we cannot make a simple equation between Jesus and God. Jesus is the revealer of God in word and action. Jesus is God's self-disclosure to the world. But Jesus is not God in God's totality. Jesus Christ is the locus of God's revelation of God, which is what the second person of the Trinity is all about,

but Jesus also remains human. Simple, glib answers will not do.

So, if none of these proposed solutions is adequate, what do we say when talking about the tri-une God? I do not think that we are ever going to find any one phrase or formula that will satisfy all of us or that will do justice to the meaning of the Trinity. This is just as well because it is wrong anyway to try to confine God to a single analogy or set of words.

With this in mind, I propose three solutions that meet the criteria that have just been outlined:

1. "God Almighty, who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer (or Sanctifier)." This makes it clear that it is one God who is all three of these things.
2. "God who is transcendent, God who is revealed, and God who is present," or "God who is beyond us, God who is with us, God who came among us," or "God beyond us, God beside us, God within us." They are a bit cumbersome but can be made poetic and flowing.
3. "God who creates, redeems, and sustains us." This is an exciting possibility because it uses verbs for God instead of nouns (taking a cue from "Yahweh"). Verbs are open and action-oriented, not static and confining, like nouns. There are not separate "-ers" in the Godhead but one God who does all three of these activities.

These three proposed formulas are merely suggestions. There are many other imaginative, creative, and valid ways we could talk about our God. I hope this essay will stimulate some.

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The third point is our commitment to collegiality with other religious bodies. This is essential for the UFMCC if we are truly an ecumenical church. In addition, it is one of the fruits of the creation of the Department of Ecumenical Relations. The mainline churches are not going to dry up and go away simply because the UFMCC is here. Therefore we must work with them, and especially with Lesbians and Gay men who choose to remain in them. We can not exist in a religious vacuum.

This brings up a fourth important point: we as a denomination, can't be all things to all people. We can't be Catholic enough for the Romans and quiet enough for the Quakers! There are some people we just can't minister to. That is why we support the Lesbian/Gay caucuses -- some people just really are Methodists and won't be comfortable outside of Methodism. The success of the caucuses in other denominations will not threaten the UFMCC -- there are enough people who need to hear the word of God that we preach!

Fifth, by working with the Gay caucuses, we are involved in ministry to others. By supporting work being done by Lutherans Concerned or Kinship or Integrity we help others of God's people who are in other folds than our own. We increase and expand our ministry with little expense.

Lastly, the most significant explanation lies in the response to the White House meeting in the religious community. The meeting at the Eagle was a very cordial and productive one. The relationships established that day continue and grow. The attitude of other Lesbian/Gay religious groups toward the UFMCC has been enhanced and strengthened -- we are leaders with people to lead now.

Troy Perry acted almost twelve years ago on an important vision for the religious world. We believe that the White House meeting is in complete harmony with Troy's inspiration and follows his lead of the UFMCC ministering to the whole of the Body of Christ -- all religious bodies that go to make up the work of God on earth.

The May-June issue of A New Day has more on the White House meeting. Thank you.

June 10, 1980

TO: The Board of Elders

FROM: P. Gallnitz

RE: Good Samaritan Project

INCOME:

PLACE OF DINNER	TOTAL PLEDGE/PAID	TOTAL RECEIVED	DUE UFMCC
Los Angeles	11,750.00	8,700.00	3,050.00
(plus McManus)	<u>3,600.00</u>	<u>-0-</u>	<u>3,600.00</u>
	15,350.00	8,700.00	6,650.00
Dallas	3,907.00	2,387.00	1,520.00
Kansas	1,675.00	775.00	900.00
Washington D.C.	3,060.00	1,985.00	1,075.00
Atlanta	<u>4,131.00</u>	<u>906.00</u>	<u>3,225.00</u>
TOTALS	28,123.00	14,753.00	13,370.00
(without McManus)	24,523.00	14,753.00	9,770.00
TICKET SALES		<u>7,922.84</u>	
TOTAL CASH RECEIVED FROM DINNERS		22,675.84	

EXPENSES:

Expenses per March 31, 1980	16,859.76
Accounts payable and Paid expenses (6-10)	8,409.69
Interest on Loan (paid 6-10)	<u>495.57</u>
Expenses	25,765.02
Office printing/postage/supplies	<u>1,500.00</u> (approximate only)
TOTAL EXPENSES	27,265.02

REVENUES:

CASH AVAILABLE FROM DINNERS

Cash from Tickets	7,922.84
Cash from Donations/Pledges	<u>14,753.00</u>
	22,675.84
Loan Cash Available for Dinner	<u>10,000.00</u>
TOTAL CASH AVAILABLE FOR DINNERS	32,675.84

MidAtlantic District Workshop, May 16, 1980, MCC Baltimore

Jennie Bull, leader

- Purpose:
1. To research, discuss and submit to the UFMCC a definition of inclusive language, its theology, parameters and guidelines for appropriate and beneficial usage in the life and worship of the church.
 2. To include the grass-roots-study-method, to ensure the availability of input from all persons throughout the UFMCC who are affected by the topic.
 3. To apply the statements produced by this work to the UFMCC Statement of Faith as found in the UFMCC By-laws and to submit any and all recommendations that the task force deems appropriate to the 10th General Conference of this Fellowship meeting in 1981.

Six Study Questions:

1. What is inclusiveness?
2. How does inclusiveness relate to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what is its scriptural witness?
3. What is the relation of the Word (Gospel) to words (language)?
4. What is inclusive language for people?
5. What is inclusive language for God?
6. What is the relationship of inclusiveness to
 - a) scripture,
 - b) traditional hymns and liturgy, and
 - c) contemporary language in worship?

Basic Reading List:

- Virginia Mollenkott. Women, Men and the Bible. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1977. \$3.95 paper. A cassette study course is available for group use. This basic introduction to biblical issues and images related to women is written for lay people by a wellknown evangelical author. Order from Wesley Theological Seminary Bookstore, 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20016. Add \$1 for postage.
- Wesley Student Council. "Toward More Inclusive Language in the Worship of the Church," Washington, D.C.: Wesley Theological Seminary, 1979. An inexpensive, readable brief pamphlet that provides useful specifics. 25¢ each, from Wesley Bookstore (address above.)
- Ann Lodge, compiler. Creation Sings. Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1979. 55 inclusive hymns in inconspicuous format. \$1.66 paper. Order from Wesley Bookstore (address above.)
- Jeffrey Pulling. "God: An Inclusive Trinity," Los Angeles: Samaritan Theological Institute, 1977. Order for 50¢ from UFMCC, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029.
- James Sandmire. "All Are One in Christ Jesus." Los Angeles: UFMCC, 1976. Still timely analysis of UFMCC context. 50¢ from UFMCC.
- Virginia Mollenkott. "Imagining God Inclusively," In Unity. Oct. 1979. Excerpt from forthcoming book; deals positively with God as Mother. 75¢ from UFMCC.
- Rosemary Ruether. "The Sexuality of Jesus," Christianity and Crisis May 29, 1978. Excellent! Order for 50¢ from UFMCC.

Contact Jennie Bull, c/o MCC DC, 945 G St., NW, Washington, DC 20001, if you have additional suggestions for the task force, before July 15. (202)232-6333.

Atlantic District Workshop, May 16, 1980, NYC Reimburse
Temple Hall, leaders

- Proposed:
1. To research, discuss and submit to the UEMCC a definition of inclusive language, its theology, parameters and guidelines for appropriate and beneficial usage in the life and worship of the church.
 2. To include the cross-theological method, to examine the availability of input from all persons throughout the UEMCC who are affected by the topic.
 3. To apply the statements produced by this work to the UEMCC Statement of Faith as found in the UEMCC by-laws and to submit any and all recommendations that the task force deems appropriate to the 1981 General Conference of this fellowship meeting in 1981.

Five Study Questions:

1. What is inclusive/exclusive?
2. How does inclusive/exclusive relate to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what is its spiritual witness?
3. What is the relation of the Word (Gospel) to words (language)?
4. What is inclusive language for people?
5. What is inclusive language for God?
6. What is the relationship of inclusive/exclusive to:
a) scripture,
b) traditional hymns and liturgy, and
c) contemporary language in worship?

Basic Reading List:

- Virginia Holmbeck, "Women, Men and the Bible," Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1977. \$3.95 paper. A concise study course in inclusive language. This basic introduction to biblical women and men is related to women is written for lay people by a well-known evangelical author. Order from Wesley Theological Bookstore, 4800 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20012. \$4.95 for postage.
- Wesley Student Council, "Toward More Inclusive Language in the Worship of the Church," Washington, D.C.: Wesley Theological Seminary, 1979. An informative, readable brief pamphlet that provides useful questions. 126 each, from Wesley Bookstore (address above).
- Ann Kolvoigt, compiler, "Creation Signs," Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1979. 55 inclusive hymns in hymnbook format. \$1.95 paper. Order from Wesley Bookstore (address above).
- Betty Polking, "God: An Inclusive Trinity," Los Angeles: Spectrum Theological Institute, 1977. Order for 50¢ from UEMCC, 2100 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90057.
- Deane Henderson, "All are One in Christ Jesus," Los Angeles: UEMCC, 1979. Brief timely analysis of UEMCC members. 50¢ from UEMCC.
- Virginia Holmbeck, "Inclusive and Exclusive," in *Galley*, Oct. 1979. Extract from forthcoming book; deals positively with God as woman. 75¢ from UEMCC.
- Rosemary Beaman, "The Femininity of Jesus," Christianity and Culture, May 22, 1978. Excellent. Order for 50¢ from UEMCC.
- Consent Temple Hall, c/o MCC DC, 245 O St., NW, Washington, DC 20001. 15 per line
Additional suggestions for the task force, before July 15. (202) 462-1332.

"Open My Eyes"

Open my eyes, that I may see, Glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key, That shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee, Ready, my God, thy will to see;
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine.

Open my ears, that I may hear, Voices of truth thou sendest clear;
And while the wave-notes fall on my ear, Everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee, Ready, my God, thy will to see;
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine.

Open my mouth, and let me bear, Gladly the warm truth everywhere;
Open my heart and let me prepare, Love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee, Ready, my God, thy will to see;
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine.

St. Anselm's Prayer (an 11th-century monk and theologian)

Christ, my mother, you gather your chickens under your wings;
these dead chickens of yours put themselves under those wings.
For by your gentleness the badly frightened are comforted,
by your sweet smell the despairing are revived,
your warmth gives life to the dead, your touch justifies sinners.
Mother, know again your dead children, both by the sign of your cross
and the voice of our confession.
Warm your chickens, give life to your dead ones, justify your sinners.
Let your terrified ones be consoled by you;
And in your whole and unceasing grace let us be refashioned by you.
For from you flows consolation for sinners;
to you be blessing for ages and ages. Amen.

"One in the Spirit"

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.

Refrain:

They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the news that God is in the land.

Refrain.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

Refrain.

"Our God Is Like an Eagle"

by Rev. Larry Bernier

When Israel camped in Sinai, then Moses heard the Lord.
This message tell the people, and give them this my word.
From Egypt I was with you, and carried on my wing,
The whole of your great nation, from slavery I did bring.

Just as a mother eagle, who helps her young to fly,
I am a mother to you, your needs I will supply.
And you are as my children, My own who hear my voice.
I am a mother to you, the people of my choice.

If God is like an eagle, who helps her young to fly,
And God is also father, then what of you and I?
We have no fear of labels. We have no fear of roles.
If God's own being blends them, we seek the selfsame goal.

Our God is not a woman, our God is not a man.
Our God is both and neither, our God is "I Who Am."
From all the roles that bind us, our God has set us free.
What freedom does God give us? The freedom just to be.



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE ROCKIES

2090 South Bannock • Denver, Colorado 80223 • Phone: (303) 778-0101

The Reverend Charlie Arehart, Pastor
The Reverend Dusty Pruitt, Associate Pastor
The Reverend Bill Taylor, Staff Minister

April 25, 1980

Dear Friends,

Enclosed with this letter are materials from the Elder's Task Force on Inclusive Language. The Rev. Mr. Brent Hawks has guided the task force, and he and the others involved have worked very hard to make this a meaningful adventure for our fellowship. I think you will agree with me that they are to be commended for the excellent productive job they are doing.

I am writing this cover letter to seek your cooperation with the task force as together we attempt to make their recommendations to General Conference truly reflective of the "grass roots" attitude found in our Fellowship. Hopefully, our statement on the issue of inclusive language will be one formulated by the congregants who are M.C.C.

Everyday, mail comes across my desk which asks "something" of me. I, like you, just have a limited number of hours free to do administrative tasks without neglecting other equally important areas of ministry. Often I tend to "file until later" those requests which require a great deal of time and effort to complete. Sometimes (and I hate to admit this) months go by before some "important" tasks are completed.

I hope that you will join me in making the requests of this task force a priority item. It is imperative that our Fellowship address this issue candidly and explicitly. We have spoken in vagaries long enough! It is equally imperative (from my perspective) that it honestly reflect the theology of our people and not be a document handed down "from on high". You, as pastor or worship coordinator, are the key to this process.

Thanks a lot for your time --- and I pray that God will bless you real good.

I Love You!

The Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart

WORKSHOP RESOURCES AND FORMAT

The following materials are designed for use with local congregations and the earlier 1980 district conferences of UFMCC. They basically have two purposes:

- 1) to gather information for the task force
- 2) to bring growth toward unity, founded in the Gospel.

Because the situation in each district will vary, and the style of each task force member varies, materials provided are not in a set framework, but can be "mixed and matched" to form a workshop suited to the needs of the people participating. The ideal perhaps is to combine resources from Model 1 and Model 2,

In any case, each workshop should at a minimum include the following:

--introduction by the task force leader and brief description of task force purpose and plans. (perhaps a written description could be handed out) Available printed resources should be mentioned, displayed, sold if available.

- a worship experience

- a scripture meditation

- feedback on either a) study questions or b) areas of agreement and questions on disagreement.

NOTE: It is especially important that each task force member carefully gather all of this material and take notes of any discussions, so that they may be used in compiling the report to the task force. Any original art, music, poetry, etc., should also be submitted.

- God-image sharing and prayer.

In general, ask yourself these questions in planning the workshop:

What do the people attending WANT to do/struggle with/ learn about inclusive language?

What are the potential areas of conflict? of agreement?

Is healing and help in relating on these questions the central need? (Model 2 best here)
Is clarifying the issues among widely varying opinions the central need? (Model 1 best here)

You will note that "inclusive language" is itself left undefined. The goal is not to impose our own definitions, but to have the participants speak from their own context.

Allow about four hours for the workshop, with at least one 10-minute break.

You will need minimal supplies, but large paper and magic markers and masking tape would be helpful, as would a chalkboard = Participants will need pencil and paper. Use a room that is large enough to move chairs around in, so people can easily form small groups and regather in one large group without the upheaval of changing rooms.

You should also ask participants to bring their Bibles, or have Bibles available. You may want to duplicate some of the hymns so all can sing, or write them on butcher paper in large print for all to see.

Some thoughts: Assume the essential wholeness and goodness of the group as the Church, the Body of Christ. Hold up the Vision. Our work as a group is to discern God's speaking in prayer and meditation, and then understand the differences in our discerning.

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
ELDERS TASK FORCE ON INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

April 14, 1980

Dear Friends,

Enclosed you will find some material supplied by the Elders Task Force on Inclusive Language. We are asking each church to hold a workshop and we have supplied two suggested formats and a reading list. The success or failure of our Task Force depends greatly on the amount of input we receive from the local churches. Your co-operation by organizing such a workshop would be very much appreciated.

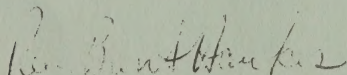
As soon as possible following the workshops we would ask that you send to us a detailed report covering the ideas, questions, etc. raised. All correspondence should be sent to:

The Reverend Brent Hawkes
Chairperson, Elders Task Force
on Inclusive Language
29 Granby Street
TORONTO, Ontario Canada
M5B 1H8

The Task Force will be meeting in July to compile our initial report so please do your best to give us some input by July 1st.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours in Christ's Love,



Reverend Brent Hawkes
Chairperson
BH/dlm
Enclosures

WORKSHOP: Model 1

Open with Hymn #267, "Open My Eyes" (from United Methodist Hymnal)

Open my eyes, that I may see, Glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key, That shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee, Ready, my God, thy will to see;
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine.

Open my ears, that I may hear, Voices of truth thou sendest clear;
And while the wave-notes fall on my ear, Everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee, Ready, my God, thy will to see;
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine.

Open my mouth, and let me bear, Gladly the warm truth everywhere;
Open my heart and let me prepare, Love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee, Ready, my God, thy will to see;
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine.

Lead the group in prayer for illumination of the Spirit

Scripture meditation: Read Galatians 3:27-28.

Request a period of silence (about 10 minutes) during which people may write their thoughts on what the passage says to them about inclusive language. They may also draw what the passage means to them, if they wish. Close with the following prayer of St. Anselm, an 11th-century British monk and theologian:

Christ, my mother, you gather your chickens under your wings;
this dead chicken of yours puts himself under those wings.
For by your gentleness the badly frightened are comforted,
by your sweet smell the despairing are revived,
your warmth gives life to the dead, your touch justifies sinners.
Mother, know again your dead son, both by the sign of your cross
and the voice of his confession.
Warm your chicken, give life to your dead man, justify your sinner.
Let your terrified one be consoled by you;
And in your whole and unceasing grace let him be refashioned by you.
For from you flows consolation for sinners;
to you be blessing for ages and ages. Amen.

Continue in group prayer, asking others to share.

Discussion groups: Divide into small groups of 4-6 each by counting off so that you end up with 3, 6 or 9 small groups. Assign each group one of the following three questions, taken from the study questions developed by the task force.

1. What is inclusiveness? (note that this refers to people, not language)
2. How does inclusiveness relate to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what is its Scriptural witness?
3. What is the relation of the Word (Gospel) to words (language)?

SUGGESTED BASIC READING LIST

Virginia Mollenkott. Women, Men and the Bible. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1977.
\$3.95 paper. A cassette study course is available for group use.

A basic introduction to biblical issues and images related to women, written
for lay people by a well known evangelical author.

Virginia Mollenkott. "Imagining God Inclusively," In Unity, October 1979.

This excerpt from her forthcoming book could be reprinted inexpensively.

Important because it deals positively with God as mother.

Rosemary Ruether. "The Sexuality of Jesus," Christianity and Crisis, May 29, 1978.

This could be reproduced inexpensively. Important because Jesus' maleness
is a "sticking point" for many women.

Jeffrey Pulling. "God: An Inclusive Trinity," Los Angeles: Samaritan Theological
Institute, 1977. 50¢. Readily available and important because language for the
Trinity is such an important issue.

James Sandmire. "All are One in Christ Jesus," UFMCC reprint. Readily available,
and still timely analysis of the UFMCC context.

Wesley Student Council. "Toward More Inclusive Language in the Worship of the
Church," Washington, D.C.: Wesley Theological Seminary, 1979. An inexpensive,
readable brief pamphlet that provides useful specifics.

Note: The above packet of 6 items could be made available for as little as \$6 plus
postage. It provides a variety of viewpoints on the main issues raised by inclusive
language. Perhaps a brief study guide for use of the materials could be developed
and distributed with them.

Close with "Our God is Like an Eagle," (to tune of "Stand up, stand up for Jesus")

When Israel camped in Sinai, Then Moses heard the Lord.
This message tell the people, and give them this my word.
From Egypt I was with you, and carried on my wing,
The whole of your great nation, from slavery I did bring.

Just as a mother eagle, who helps her young to fly,
I am a mother to you, your needs I will supply.
And you are as my children, My own who hear my voice.
I am a mother to you, the people of my choice.

If God is like an eagle, who helps her young to fly,
And God is also father, then what of you and I?
We have no fear of labels. We have no fear of roles.
If God's own being blends them, we seek the selfsame goal.

Our God is not a woman, our God is not a man.
Our God is both and neither, our God is "I Who Am."
From all the roles that bind us, our God has set us free.
What freedom does God give us? The freedom just to be.

Instruct each group to spend about 20 minutes coming up with a one-sentence answer to their question, which they will write on a large piece of paper.

Gather the entire group together and ask a representative from each discussion group to share their answer. Post the answers. The leader should point out any consensus among the answers, any interrelations. Some dynamite discussion can happen at this point, but limit the time to about 10-15 minutes. Have someone take notes.

Now, spend at least 15-20 minutes on GROUP PROCESS. How did the people relate in their small groups? What were the feelings? Who felt excluded? misunderstood? People will want to continue to talk about content; steer them back to process.

(This is a good place for a short break.)

Return to the same groups to consider the last three questions:

4. What is inclusive language for people?
5. What is inclusive language for God?
6. What is the relationship of inclusiveness to scripture, to traditional hymns and liturgy and to contemporary language in worship?
(This last question may be divided among 3 groups if there are lots of people.)

Again, ask them to spend 20 minutes coming up with a one-sentence answer. Follow the same format of reporting back and posting answers on large paper. As leader, point out any consensus, in particular any interrelation between these answers and those given during the first session. Try to focus the discussion on areas of agreement. Make certain all opinions are recorded.

Now, again spend at least 15-20 minutes on GROUP PROCESS. How did people relate the second time around? Did the "specifics" create more tension? Why? How was it handled by the group? Try to formulate any areas of tension as questions.

Close with reading Galatians 5:13-16, followed by a brief silent meditation. (A short "break" here?)

God-image sharing: Break people into pairs, preferably with a stranger or someone quite different from themselves. Spend about 5 minutes in silent meditation on an image of God that is most personally meaningful to you right now. Then each of the pairs share that image with the other, for another 10 minutes. Reassemble as a large group and ask people to talk about how they felt in the sharing:

Did the other person "understand"?

Did you feel resistance from the other?

Were you defensive about your image?

Did the other person's image create problems or barriers for you? Could you claim it as your own? Could you relate to it in worship?

Close by standing in a prayer circle. Ask each person, in prayer, to share their God-image, completing the following prayer:

"We praise you, God, who _____"

Close with the following prayer, or similar:

"God, accept these our prayers of adoration, the richness of making yourself known to us. In thanksgiving, we are one in Christ Jesus." Amen.

(An alternative, which could happen simultaneously, is to ask people to draw their most personal image of God and then share it with another.)

"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.

Refrain:

They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the news that God is in this land.

Refrain.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

Refrain.

Then ask people to share their experiences. Minister to each other.

Discussion groups: Divide into small groups of 4 to 6 each by counting off. Try to mix people from different churches, women and men, etc. Ask them to discuss the following question for about 20 minutes.

"What are three areas of agreement you have on the issue of inclusive language?" Write each in a simple, positive statement on a large paper.

Gather the entire group together and ask a representative from each group to share their answer. Post the answers. The leader should point out any consensus among the answers. Someone should take notes. Allow about 15 minutes for discussion.

Now, spend at least 15-20 minutes on group process. How did people relate in their small groups? What were the feelings? Who felt excluded or misunderstood? People will want to continue to talk about content, but steer them back to process.

(This is a good place for a short break.)

Return to the same small groups to consider the following question for about 20 minutes.

"What are the three principle areas of disagreement in your group on the issue of inclusive language? State each in a simple question, on a large paper.

Again, gather the entire group together and have representatives report back. Note any consensus and take notes. Post statements. (Note: make certain all statements are collected for later review in reporting to task force.)

Now, spend at least 30 minutes on group process. Was the tension greater this time? Why? What was most threatening? It is important to affirm groups that have worked well together, especially if they show major disagreements, because that process IS the goal of the workshop.

NOTE: Because in some cases the areas of disagreement will be with churches outside the district, and those attending the workshop will all agree, you will need to vary the format of the discussion groups by asking them to imagine a person they would most disagree with about inclusive language, and then ask that person three questions.

UFMCC TASK FORCE ON INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Workshop: Model 2

Open with hymn #267 "Open My Eyes" (from United Methodist Hymnal; see model 1 for words)

Lead the group in prayer for illumination of the Spirit. Share briefly the task force purpose and history.

Scriptural Meditation: Announce a silent meditation based on a contemporary adaptation of I Corinthians 8: 1-13, substituting the example of language. Direct people to get comfortable (take off shoes, sit on floor in a circle, whatever). Now close eyes relax and breathe quietly. Explain that we are going on a short journey. After a minute of silence, begin: (maybe hand out copies of the "letter"?) (If group is not relaxed, maybe preface this with sharing in pairs on their personal history on language.) "It is evening, all the world is quiet. You are one of a small group of persecuted Christians gathered in the upper room of a home in Corinth. You have come together to worship God. A letter has been received and you are about to hear it for the first time. It is a letter from Paul, a servant of God and Christ Jesus and messenger to the Gentiles. He has written a letter to all the churches. Be very alert. Listen carefully to his words.

"Now concerning the word for God that you use in worship: we know that 'all of us possess knowledge'. 'Knowledge' puffs us, but love builds up. If any of us imagine that we know something, we do not yet know as we ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by God.

"Therefore, about the words you use for God, we know that 'the words themselves have no real existence' and the 'God is Spirit beyond all our words'. For although there may be many words for God in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many idolatrous 'gods' and 'lords' in our lives—yet for us there is one God, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Redeemer, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

"However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being previously unaccustomed to using these words, speak them as real images of God, idolizing the words; and their conscience, being weak, is led astray. Words will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not speak them, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow becomes a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you, a person of knowledge, speaking in idolatrous language, might not they be encouraged, if their conscience is weak, to speak idolatrous words? And so, by your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed, the sister or brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers or sisters and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

"Therefore, if words are a cause of a person's falling, I will not use those words, unless I should cause that person to fall."

Pause so that the group may have an opportunity to reflect. Then continue: "What would you like to say to Paul? What do you think Paul would like to say to you? Visit with Paul for a few moments." Pause for two or three minutes (or five or ten if people seem involved). "Now it is time to close your meditation. Say goodbye to Paul and slowly return to this place." **

Sing softly together, "We are one in the Spirit".

**Instead of talking with Paul, some might prefer to write a letter back to him in response. You might want to help the group visualize Paul.

(A short break here?)

God-image sharing: Ask people to break into pairs, preferably with a stranger or someone quite different from themselves, and spend about 15 minutes sharing with that person about someone who is special to you, that you love and highly respect (you don't necessarily have to know them personally). Then, gather in a circle, join hands and close eyes. Ask each person to think of one word describing the person they just talked about. After a silence, ask each person to prayerfully share that word. After all have spoken, close with the following prayer, or similar.

"God, accept these our prayers of adoration. We praise you as you show yourself to us through those we love. We praise the richness and wonder of your self, and give thanks that we are all one in Christ Jesus. Amen."

(The Model 1 God-image sharing could follow this one quite naturally.)

Close with singing "Our God is Like an Eagle." (See Model 1 for words, to tune of "Stand up, stand up for Jesus")

End with group prayer. What is God saying to me out of this? What is my response to God?

If a women's newsletter is established at the women's conference or educational materials are produced by the women, the district shall budget reasonable costs of mailing and production.

RESOLVED THAT U.F.M.C.C. recognizes that sexism is not merely wrong politically--it is wrong morally and it is wrong theologically--and that in Christ there is no male nor female (Gal. 3:28) and that Christian ethical precepts flow therefrom.

RESOLVED THAT U.F.M.C.C. recognizes the spiritual growth among all women at this time and affirms its eagerness to learn and grow from ~~Christian~~ ^{INCLUSIVE?} theology.

RESOLVED THAT U.F.M.C.C. recognizes the significant and valuable contributions of women by redoubling its efforts to include women, especially women committed to increasing the participation of women in U.F.M.C.C., in visible leadership positions in worship and other areas of church life.

RESOLVED THAT U.F.M.C.C. at this General Conference, ^{recommmendation} ~~reaffirming the directive~~ ^{CONTINUE} of the UFMCC 1979 General Conference, direct its member churches to change the language used during worship services (including hymns, liturgy, scripture and sermons) and that each church use inclusive (nonsexist) language therein, as informed by guidelines supplied by the Task Force on Women, ^{FFC} ~~the women's conferences in each district, or by the women of the local church, mission or study group.~~

RESOLVED THAT U.F.M.C.C. at this General Conference embark on a more serious effort to minister to the Children of MCC:

a. nursery care shall be provided and worship services meeting the needs of children shall be encouraged at each Sunday worship service and at every conference, even if there is an apparent demand, because only if these services are provided will some parents come to church initially;

b. that all of the care provided shall be loving, kind and Christian;

c. that U.F.M.C.C. recognizes its special obligation by working to increase the love and acceptance of children within the church family.

d. all churches are encouraged to publicize these services.

RESOLVED THAT U.F.M.C.C. recognizes the value and validity of worship services held by and for women on an occasional or regular basis in ^{COORDINATION} cooperation with the pastor, as determined by the women of each church. Each church shall make every attempt to facilitate such worship services.

RESOLVED THAT the Task Force on Women will provide to all local churches any educational materials at its disposal and will make every attempt to aid churches in effecting the above changes.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ann Montague, chairperson, Task Force on Women

Informational Note: The two pamphlets attached ("Everything You Wanted to Know About Why Women are Angry...but were afraid to ask" and "Good Reading...in women's issues") are also available at the Bookstore. Two booklets are also available for sale in the Bookstore: Reversing Your Local Hymnal is a listing of almost 800 hymns that indicates how they--with small changes--can be rendered inclusive of all persons. It is hoped that every church will obtain and use this guide (hymns with racist and other exclusive terms are also noted). Sexism and Christian Ethics, by Marge Ragone, explores the root of sexism in theology and how it is antithetical to the teaching and spirit of Christ.

To: The Task Force on Inclusive Language and
the clergy and other members of the UFMCC

Reverend and dear Brent;

We thank you and the other members of the Task Force for the gift of work and time and concern embodied in the draft report. And we thank you for the invitation to return our "questions, suggestions and general comments." This is the beginning of our response to the work of the Task Force. And we regard it, too, as a gift. That is, we offer it to you all and to the whole Fellowship in the hope, and with the prayer, that it will contribute to discussion and decision, so that presently the whole Fellowship may be able to adopt a Statement which truly expresses our commitment to inclusiveness and guides our living and working and speaking inclusively and at the same time expresses our commitment to Jesus Christ.

In this mailing we offer a version of the Statement of Faith which we have worked out in long conversations and much prayer, and directly in response to and consideration of the present text of Article III and the Draft Report text.

We are persuaded that the Statement of Faith can be and must be in inclusive language and that it must be forthrightly declarative of our faith in Jesus Christ. We fully understand that there are those in our Fellowship, and in the larger community we address, whose sensitivities are touched by reference to the human (hence male) nature of Jesus of Nazareth, and that it seems to some, therefore, that reference ought to be to Christ, to the spiritual nature, of the Redeemer. We believe the Fellowship must address such feelings ministerially and sympathetically. It is our prayer and purpose that nothing we do or say put any obstacle in anyone's way or give anyone any avoidable pain.

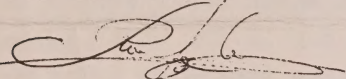
But we must say that a Statement of Faith for the UFMCC, as a Fellowship of Churches which move "in the mainstream of Christianity", must be explicit in asserting that our faith is in Jesus Christ, and that it must not be susceptible of an interpretation that there is or can be any other Christ than the One born of Mary and anticipated in the scriptures of the people of Israel. It is and will be the responsibility of the Fellowship and of all its members to minister that faith and that Statement of Faith so as to regather and to heal, not so as to alienate and

hurt.

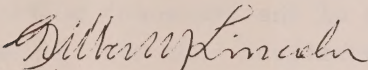
Our calling from God to be inclusive in language and otherwise is not a permission to depart from the core of Christian faith, but is a calling to be prophetic and free and responsible in discovering new ways of ministering that faith, "once for all delivered," in new ways to the changing circumstances and challenges of the world.

That is why we have ventured to offer the Task Force and the Fellowship a rewritten version of the Statement of Faith, one we intend and hope to be both inclusive and distinctively Christian.

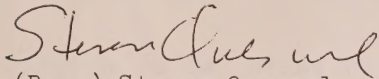
We commend it, and ourselves, to your prayer. And, again, we express our appreciation of the Task Force's work and our love for its members.



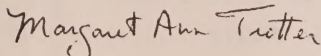
(Rev.) Ron J. Anderson
New Freedom Evangelistic Team



(Rev.) Gilbert H. Lincoln

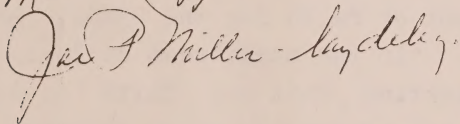
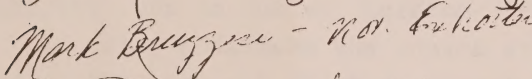
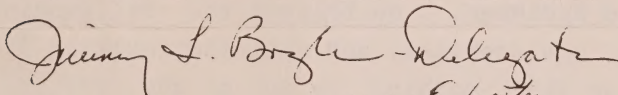


(Rev.) Steven Quesnel



(Exht.) Margaret Ann (Mat) Trotter

"Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)



1

Burnout

*"Come to Me all Ye Who Labour
and are Heavy Laden and I Will
Give You Rest," Matthew 11:28*

by R. Adam DeBaugh

Let's Do The Gospel Series #1

Burnout

**"Come to Me all Ye Who Labour and are Heavy Laden
and I Will Give You Rest," Matthew 11: 28**

Let me tell you the story of the generous bag lady. Now, anyone who has visited a major city like New York or Washington will remember seeing bag ladies. They are the women street people; they live on the streets, sleeping wherever they can find shelter, scavenging for food, begging for handouts. They carry all their possessions with them at all times in a wide assortment of shopping bags, hence the term "bag lady." Though they are almost always ignored by more well-to-do passersby, they have great resourcefulness, cunning and strength -- and they, no less than any of us, are children of God.

Every once in a while, you will come across a very generous bag lady. Like her sisters on the streets, she spends lots of time rummaging through trash cans, collecting useful bits of the flotsam and jetsam that our wasteful culture daily throws away. But the generous bag lady is different from most of her sisters in that she is a giver. She is a real soft touch, always ready to help out others she meets. She is forever digging around in her sacks to come up with a half-eaten candy bar for a friend, a bit of newspaper to stuff in the shoes of a bum to patch the holes in his soles, a paperback book to help a friend pass the lonely hours; an apple, a toy, a trinket, a bit of costume jewelry, a scarf, a hat, a pin, some thread, whatever someone else needs.

The generous bag lady goes through the day encountering people whose simple, day-to-day needs she can help meet. At the end of the day, our generous bag lady settles down at her favorite space for the night -- a certain subway station, a comfortable hot air vent in the sidewalk, or a cozy doorway out of the wind. She takes off her tattered shoes, massages her aching feet, scratches here and there, yawns and stretches. Finally she reaches down into her shopping bags, hoping to find a little something left for herself, a salvaged sandwich, a discarded pillow, a magazine - something just for her. But she finds she has nothing left. She has given away everything she had. There is nothing special left just for her.

She is tired, she is alone, and she has spent her day helping others, but she has no more resources to help herself.

Do you ever feel that way? Do you ever feel that you have spent a day like the generous bag lady, giving and giving until you have nothing left for yourself?

If so, you are a victim of "burnout."

Like the generous bag lady, you might feel disillusioned, irritable, exhausted, depressed, overwhelmed, futile, out of control, bored, frustrated, unmotivated, angry, or unable to make decisions. You may have trouble sleeping, or suffer from physical disorders, feel trapped, or disappointed in your life and work. You may lack any enthusiasm or a feeling of accomplishment both at home and at work.

The burned out person lacks energy most of the time. Other physical symptoms include fatigue, insomnia, impotence, a feeling of being drained for a long period of time. Minor ailments (like colds) hang on and on.

Psychological symptoms include a feeling of not being appreciated, paranoia, a tendency to magnify problems, a general sense of boredom, and being intellectually dull.

Emotionally, the burned out person experiences social withdrawal, including withdrawal from significant emotional relationships (such as with one's lover or spouse), a tendency to bottle up emotions, and a withdrawal into one's self.

Spiritually, the burnout victim often experiences a severe faith crisis, doubting beliefs and faith. Self-esteem and confidence suffer, as do feelings of worth, values and life commitments.

It seems that the women and men who "burn out" are the ones who are the most active, the most effective, the busiest, the leaders in our community. Yet suddenly they quit, or disappear, or storm off in a display of pique that is as destructive to the organization as it is unexpected.

The tragedy for the organization, religious group or business to which the person belongs is great because often the victim of burnout is someone who has been important to the success and progress of the organization. The tragedy to the victim is even greater because burning out involves fundamental doubts about one's own value and self-worth. Unless checked and reversed, the effect of burnout is that a once vital and active person is reduced to impotence and self-pity.

We have heard so much about burnout among our leaders that it is important to examine just what it is, what causes it, what the symptoms are, how to recognize it in ourselves and in others, and how to prevent it. As Christians and other people of faith it is important to be good stewards of our talents and resources. Burnout especially affects people in the helping professions (counsellors, pastors, social workers, teachers, medical personnel), and people active in liberation causes such as the women's movement, the civil rights movement, or the Gay and Lesbian rights movement. The Lesbian and Gay religious movement's most active adherents are especially susceptible to burnout as it combines difficult religious ministry and the inherent struggle for liberation. But it should be emphasized that no organization, business, movement, or activity is immune to burnout among its more active members.

We must remember that even Jesus of Nazareth had times when he needed to get away from all the people making demands on him for healing and comfort, and even from his disciples. Frequently, Scriptures tell us of Jesus withdrawing to the wilderness to pray. Some have suggested that Jesus' tirade at Jerusalem when he threw the tradespeople out of the Temple was a form of burning out -- an unexpectedly violent response to an intolerable situation.

What is burnout? What we call burnout is a function of tedium, stress, pressure, or frustration. It can make a person weak, angry, physically sick, impotent and unproductive. It disrupts work at the office and the functioning of

an organization. It makes the victim unwelcome even at home.

The condition is contagious, affecting others around the burnout victim, since no one is immune to it. Burnout is a case of the “blahs” that lasts for months, dragging down workers, activists, ministers (both clergy and lay), students, home-makers, and leaders.

Burnout can be stopped and cured, and it can be prevented. It is important to understand that burnout is a function of stress and pressure. We are all subject to stress, but the burnout victim feels under pressure of such intensity and duration that she or he becomes physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually depleted.

Such levels of stress develop especially in very conscientious and highly motivated people whose jobs or callings involve a great deal of failure or little evidence of success. Thus, people who work in areas of ministry to others are extremely susceptible. It is usually the diligent worker who feels the strain of the workload most and as a result sets unrealistic goals and gets frustrated when those goals can't be met. That kind of person then begins to grow apathetic and backs off from people who could help.

The victim of such prolonged, negative stress becomes exhausted psychologically, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Gradually the burnout victim cares less and less about work, once exciting and challenging. Important emotional relationships, and other activities which were once interesting become seemingly unimportant. The negative takes over and frustration becomes the norm of life.

Job and Church Burnout

Job burnout is a major cause of absenteeism in the United States and is often the result of reactions to the work environment. Domestic pressures such as unhappy living situations, family fights, alcohol and drug abuse, and financial problems are sometimes the consequence of job burnout but most often not the causes of it.

The disillusionment of burnout particularly affects those in the helping professions, and is something people who work with people must be continually on guard against. Constant work with troubled, unhappy, needy or ill people can produce immense emotional strain which could lead to burnout, since this kind of work frequently doesn't have many obvious rewards and successes.

The followers of Jesus, with the Christian emphasis on meeting human needs, are especially susceptible to burnout. Though we are assured that “with Christ, all things are possible,” and we know that the Christian's faith should be the most important guard against burnout, it is obvious to anyone who works in the church that Christians often fall short of the promise that is central to their faith. In short, church folk burn out too, and often!

People who are active in a church or religious organization, even a volunteer ministry which is not a full time paid job, need to understand that they are very

susceptible to burnout. Over-involvement in church work can be just as debilitating, stressful and frustrating as your full-time employment.

If you find that you are taking on more and more responsibilities in your congregation because: "there just isn't anyone else to do it;"

- if you take on just one more task because: "if I don't do it, it will be done badly, or worse yet, won't get done at all;"

- if you find that you have no friends outside your church or organization:

- if you give up your last free evening in the week for one more meeting or activity;

- if you notice that there is so much to organize and worry about that you can't concentrate on worship and when at church you never seem to have time just to socialize and be friendly with people;

- if you don't seem to have time to pray or read the Bible;

- if you find you can't go to anyone (including your pastor) about your inner feelings, doubts and frustrations because you don't want people to think you are weak or incapable;

- if you always end up volunteering for church projects;

- if you feel guilty about saying "no" to any church project or event;

- if you feel exhausted and trapped and begin to dread going to church;

then the chances are you are well on your way to burnout because of your involvement with your religious organization.

Church activity is a job too, and it seems to be uniquely suited to burn people out. Jesus warned us about this when he said, "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." There is so much to do, and we are very few, and the work is *so* important that it is clear why church activists sometimes burn out.

Causes of Burnout

Here is a list of many of the causes of burnout. (We are grateful to the Reverend Claudia Vierra for articulating many of these causes in a workshop at the Western Clergy Conference of the UFMCC in 1980. The Reverend Vierra's workshop notes were reprinted in the January/February issue of In Unity and formed a basis for this list.)

1. Too much, too little. That is, too much work and too little rewards.
2. Work in a helping profession: especially if the work is constant, intense and difficult.
 - a. some people have little energy and drain yours.
 - b. you are overloaded, too many appointments, work.
 - c. you are involved with very difficult cases.
 - d. you give too much of yourself too often.
 - e. you have the responsibility for the life or well being of other people.
3. Your job is tedious: you do the same things in the same way.

4. Your constituents (congregation, clients, co-workers, members of your organization, etc.) have high expectations of you.
 - a. you are under constant pressure to perform.
 - b. there are ambiguous or conflicting values.
 - c. you are not sure what is expected of you or how to do it.
 - d. the success or failure of your church, organization or business depends on you.
5. You don't get sufficient recognition or support from your community.
 - a. you feel nobody knows or cares that you do a good job.
 - b. people only complain, never praise.
 - c. you are never publicly praised or thanked.
6. You are in a highly competitive work environment.
7. You live and work in the city and feel constantly rushed, pressured, hassled and crushed.
8. You have to work in crowded, noisy situations.
 - a. your work space is uncomfortable.
 - b. you lack confidential, private work space.
 - c. you often can't concentrate because of noise or interruptions.
 - d. you live and work in the same place.
 - e. you never get away from your work.
9. You lack control over interaction with others.
 - a. you have little or no say in decisions that affect you.
 - b. another person controls your life and/or work.
10. You are physically afraid.
11. You lack the training and preparedness for burnout and it is unexpected (keep reading!).
12. You have high ideals and expectations for yourself, others, and your work or ministry.
 - a. you want to save the world.
 - b. when you have to back away, you feel guilty.
13. You don't seem to see any success from your efforts, your work seems meaningless and without value.
14. You identify too much with your clients, patients, parishioners, students, etc.
 - a. your heart "bleeds" for them.
 - b. you want to help too much.
 - c. you weep for others.
15. You only get noticed when you do something wrong.
 - a. you feel you can't make mistakes (or shouldn't).
 - b. you must be superhuman.
 - c. you "can't let them down."
16. You feel alone and isolated and feel you don't have sufficient support from colleagues, ministers, administration.
17. You are letting work cut into your personal time.

- a. you rarely get to spend uninterrupted time with your spouse, or
 - b. you don't seem to be able to develop a relationship with anyone.
 - c. you don't have time to pray or study.
 - d. you are constantly interrupted at home and on your days off.
18. You feel that what happens to the people you are trying to help is "your responsibility." Other people's salvation, health or well-being is dependent solely on you.
19. You feel you are underpaid for a person with your ability, experience, or education.
20. You don't have or don't take regular days off and/or vacation time.
- a. you feel guilty when you do take time off.

If five or more of these 20 things apply to you and your work or ministry you are a candidate for burnout. If the number of items you identify exceeds 10, read on, and quickly! If you are experiencing 15 or more of the above, you are burned out.

Symptoms of Burnout

The symptoms of burnout are sometimes detected by people close to the victim before the victim sees them. Despite this the victim is the only one who can begin to effect a burnout cure.

One of the most familiar complaints of the burnout victim is feeling trapped. This may be because the victim sees no future in work, no real advancement opportunities, no way to change a job that is becoming increasingly boring and meaningless. It may, on the other hand, be caused by a feeling of indispensability – "they can't do without me" – and a sense of not daring to leave.

Since burnout is often characterized by a feeling of not being able to accomplish all of one's work, the person suffering from burnout sometimes starts by working harder (increased overtime, no vacation, no breaks for lunch or coffee, working on scheduled days off, bringing work home) in order to live up to unreasonable standards set either by one's self or by others.

This response is faulty since the problem of burnout is not the amount of work that needs to be done but rather how the work is being done. Increasing the time and effort one devotes to work also increases the amount of stress one is subjected to. Such prolonged stress can lead to ulcers, gastrointestinal disorders, impotence, headaches, difficulty in breathing, heart attacks, and even cause the common cold to linger.

As part of this response the worker begins to suspect his or her competence is slipping since "the work never seems to get finished; there is always more to do." In defense the burnout victim insists that no one else can do the job, can't

accept suggestions or criticism, worries about image, is irritated by little things and critical of others' work, out of touch with family and friends, and out of control.

This phase eventually gives way to its opposite: escape, increased tardiness, absences, illness, a decrease in efficiency and productivity, long lunch and coffee breaks, and avoidance of phone calls and meetings. This leads to greater feelings of frustration and a decrease in one's perception of self-worth and accelerates the downward spiral of burnout. The burnout victim experiences social withdrawal, physical illness and exhaustion. Another common aspect of the escape response is increased drug and alcohol use. The high incidence of alcohol and drug abuse among high-achievers and activists is indicative of burnout and only leads to more misery. Addiction to mood-altering drugs like alcohol, Valium and Librium is common.

Finally, if allowed to go unchecked, the burnout victim is reduced to total dysfunction.

Symptoms of Burnout

This list is a compilation of common symptoms displayed by a person who is burned out. It may be similar to the list of causes of burnout, but the difference is that these are symptoms demonstrated by an actual burnout victim.

1. Diminished sense of humor.
 - a. inability to laugh at daily, on the job situations.
 - b. inability to laugh at yourself.
2. Skipping rest and food breaks.
 - a. continually having "no time" for coffee or lunch.
3. Increased overtime and no vacation.
 - a. you feel you are indispensable.
 - b. you are reluctant to say no.
 - c. you are overextended or overcommitted.
 - d. you have no time for relaxation or recreation.
 - e. you are working harder and accomplishing less.
4. Increased physical complaints.
 - a. fatigue, insomnia, exhaustion, nightmares, impotence.
 - b. irritability, frequently being upset.
 - c. muscle tension, aches and pains, trembling, tremors.
 - d. stomach upset, ulcers.
 - e. susceptibility to illness, frequent colds.
 - f. headaches, migraines, eyestrain.
 - g. restlessness.
 - h. trouble breathing, getting enough air.

- i. itching, dermatitis.
5. Social withdrawal.
 - a. pulling away from co-workers, friends, family, spouse.
 - b. activities you once enjoyed no longer interest you.
 - c. less communicative with close friends, loved ones.
 - d. hostile or cynical attitude towards others.
 - e. want to be less with people generally.
 - f. increased marital/spouse/family conflict.
6. Changed job performance.
 - a. increased absenteeism, tardiness, use of sick leave.
 - b. decrease in efficiency and productivity.
 - c. careless or mechanical work.
 - d. dread going to work in the morning.
 - e. work day filled with constant frustration and dissatisfaction.
 - f. depressed on Mondays.
 - g. yearn for weekends.
 - h. can't wait to get home at end of day.
 - i. easily distracted from work.
 - j. fail to return phone calls.
7. Increased reliance on crutches.
 - a. alcohol and/or other drugs, tranquilizers, mood altering drugs.
 - b. increased smoking.
 - c. overeating, eating lots of sweets.
 - d. watching much more television (beware of day-time soap operas).
 - e. reading, especially lots of escapist reading, fiction, science fiction, mysteries, etc. (It should be emphasized that TV and reading are not bad *per se*, only when indulged in to the exclusion or detriment of one's work or ministry.)
8. Internal changes.
 - a. emotional exhaustion, tired of it all, drained.
 - b. loss of self-esteem, self-respect, self-worth.
 - c. depression, frustration, a trapped feeling, sadness.
 - d. loss of perspective, catastrophizing minor setbacks.
 - e. unrealistic standards of behavior for self and others.
 - f. more forgetful than usual.
 - g. lose temper more easily.
 - h. frequent feelings of envy.
 - i. feel easily rejected, hopeless, despair.
 - j. unexplained, unusual emotional responses, ie. crying jags, angry outbursts.
 - k. over-aggressive or over-sensitive reactions.
9. Feeling inadequately compensated for the work you do.
10. Loss of concern for parishioner, client, patient, student.
 - a. "the hell with them."

- b. dehumanizing people your job is to help: "them versus me," derogatory labels, insulting jokes.
- 11. Negative attitude toward people.
 - a. cynical and negative feelings.
 - b. suspicious of people's motives.
 - c. "they deserve what they get."
 - d. "they are not really trying."
- 12. Pessimistic about work and the world in general.
 - a. everything is bad or wrong.
 - b. nothing will work to end the problems.
 - c. there is no use going on.
 - d. nothing I can do will make a difference.
- 13. Finding it increasingly difficult to make decisions.
- 14. Suicidal wishes and thoughts.

This list of common symptoms of burnout is not necessarily an exhaustive one. Each person is different and will exhibit various symptoms at different times. Burnout is not as easy to diagnose as a fairly common and uncomplicated disease. No one of these symptoms, or even a combination of them, is proof of burnout. But if a few of these indicators is evident in you or someone you know, and if the characteristics are unusual for the person, it is possible that the person is a victim of burnout.

How Do We Cure Burnout?

We cannot cure burnout in someone else. Only the victim can effect a cure. The cure for burnout is a long and arduous one and many hurdles have to be overcome. The first step is to recognize burnout in yourself and determine to end it.

The second step is to talk to someone about your burnout. Sharing your feelings with a co-worker, friend, spouse, pastor or counsellor will help you clarify and identify your feelings.

The third step in curing burnout is to evaluate yourself and your work or ministry. Ask yourself how many responsibilities you have. Do you enjoy your work? Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in everything you do? What things still give you satisfaction? What are the most frustrating? Do you have time for yourself for prayer and meditation, for study and Scripture reading? Do you feel good physically? How is your diet?

You might decide to resign from some of the commitments you have in order to concentrate on the ones that are truly priorities to you. Sit down and think about which are the things that you are most interested in, which do you do best, which are you happiest doing, which are your priorities?

In the brief three years of Jesus' ministry and as busy as he was, he took time to rest. Despite the fact that Jesus spent a great deal of time preaching to large crowds, healing the sick, instructing his disciples, debating with the Pharisees,

and giving hope to countless people he came in contact with, he frequently took time to get away for meditation and prayer. He spent time at relaxed dinners with friends and followers; he went to parties (his first miracle was performed at a wedding feast in Cana).

As you examine your life and your work or ministry, you may find a number of solutions you can begin. Rather than getting distressed over your work situation, work to de-stress your job. Understand that there are two kinds of stress: that which is self-imposed (which you can do something about) and that which is external. Try to eliminate stressful situations on your job that you have control of, a cluttered or noisy work area, for instance. Don't reach for unrealistic goals.

Prepare yourself for stress. Carefully evaluate what you can and cannot do, then do what you can, and seek help for what you can't do. Try to anticipate stress situations and plan your strategy.

Rearrange your office. Change your working hours. Do the same things in different ways if possible. Get involved in new projects, trade some responsibilities with co-workers. Especially make other people aware when you need time for yourself, when you need help on a project, when you need support and praise ("strokes").

Try putting "sanity islands" in your work routine. Make sure you take lunch and coffee breaks, and do not bring business to those breaks. Avoid "working lunches" when possible. Take a weekend to travel once a month, get out of town, see something different.

Take a short leave of absence (a month, for instance) with pay, if possible. Be sure to arrange for complete coverage of your responsibilities while you will be gone. It is also possible, sometimes, to get a year's leave of absence (without pay, usually) for intensive study. Try one of many retreat centers that exist just to enable people like yourself to get away for a short time for peace, quiet, meditation and prayer.

In most cases a two-week vacation is not sufficient to break the pattern of burnout. Most people use the first week to get used to being off, by the second week they are relaxed and a healing process begins, but suddenly they have to go back to the same job, with the same stress and environment which is causing burnout in the first place. The last day of the vacation, they go from zero stress to completely uptight again, in anticipation of the return to work. Nothing is solved.

Finally, you may decide to quit your job. This option is often discussed, but seldom actually done because people look at resignation as a form of defeat. But if you are sure that it is the job that you are in that is causing you to have that burnt up feeling, then leaving is a good solution. This will add more stress to your life until you are settled into a new position, but that may be just the jolt you need to get your life back in order. Before making such a drastic move as resigning you need to take a serious look at yourself. Is it really the job, or is it you? Have you felt this way before about other jobs you have held? Instead of

quitting your job, have you tried to change your attitude from “why me?” to “great, this is what I have been trained to do.” Try reinterpreting your job; find the challenges and excitement. Sometimes the quality of your work is being affected by the sheer quantity of things you are involved in.

Curing Burnout

Here is a list of ways to cure burnout. (Once again, we are indebted to the Reverend Claudia Vierra for her workshop on burnout, from which the basis of this list was developed.)

1. Talk to a sympathetic person: pastor, peer, professional, para-professional or other understanding person.
2. Get yourself back in good physical condition.
 - a. exercise -- regularly, don't avoid it.
 - b. improve your diet, with vitamin supplements (especially vitamins B and C), protein, fresh fruit and vegetables, less junk food and sweets (regardless of how busy you are -- that is one way you got burned out in the first place).
 - c. relax -- take a nap, spend time meditating or in prayer, go for a walk, take (don't skip) rest time.
3. Lower your personal expectations to a reasonable height.
 - a. acknowledge your own limits.
 - b. don't take on “just one more project.”
 - c. learn to say “no” without feeling guilty.
 - d. be assertive when your own well being is at stake.
4. Take regular days off -- schedule them and always take them.
5. Take vacations -- use them to get away to a geographically different place. Don't spend your vacation doing what you do for a living somewhere else (for instance, the clergy should resist the ego-temptation to preach while on vacation; sit in a pew for a change and let someone else run a worship service).
6. Vary your work patterns.
 - a. do old things in a new way.
 - b. rearrange your office furniture.
 - c. change your work schedule.
7. Separate your work from the rest of your life.
 - a. don't bring your work home.
 - b. confine each stress to one part of your life.
 - c. if you must work at home, make a special place at home for work and do it there.
8. Improve your work setting by eliminating crowding, noise, discomfort.
9. Tell yourself about the good things you do.

10. Don't dwell on failures and shortcomings either of yourself or of others.
11. Set up two kinds of goals:
 - a. long term goals of major change.
 - b. short term goals for each day.
 - c. do top priority things first.
 - d. don't think or say, "Oh, I still have to do so much."
12. When possible, take control of interaction and discussion that affects you and be assertive.
13. Allow temporary withdrawals -- vary your work.
14. Try a decompression routine on your way home from work.
 - a. exercise.
 - b. walk home.
 - c. vary your route to keep it interesting.
15. Take "your" time at home.
16. Take "your" time with friends and enjoy it.
17. Get involved in sports.
18. Get involved in a hobby.
19. Enjoy where you live and who you live with.
 - a. if you don't, change it.
 - b. spend quality time with your spouse or room-mates.
 - c. don't compromise your living space with work hassles.
20. Clarify your job description and the expectations of your employers, congregation, co-workers, or constituents.

These 20 ways to cure burnout will go a long way to end a crisis in your life, either singly or a combination of them. But it is a lot harder to cure burnout after it has occurred than it is to prevent it.

Avoiding Burnout

Avoiding burnout is *your* responsibility. If you don't take responsibility for making time for yourself and doing the other things that will prevent you burning out, no one else will. Since it is much easier to avoid burnout than to cure it once it has occurred, there are a few things you can do now.

First of all, understand that while your work is important, no work is important enough to become sick or burnt out over. No one, not even you, is indispensable. The question busy people must face is, "how do we replenish ourselves?"

Don't get trapped in your work or ministry. A major complaint of people who have burned out is that they feel trapped in their job. They can't get out, either because "no one else can do the job like I can," or because "I have nowhere

else to go, nothing else I can do.”

Understand that you are not indispensable. The world will still manage to turn on its axis without you, believe it or not. Train other people to do your job to help you out and take some of the pressure off you. Pace yourself -- few things absolutely *have* to get done within the next hour.

Realize that you are not the first person to face the problem of burnout. It is nothing to be ashamed of. The real sin is not doing anything about potential burnout; if you do nothing to prevent it and do burn out, you are guilty of a terrible waste of human resources -- yours -- and that is bad stewardship of one of God's greatest gifts to us.

Watch for signs of burnout listed in this booklet and if they appear, pace yourself, back off from some of your work and relax.

Set smaller goals for yourself. Divide large projects into smaller pieces so the immensity doesn't overwhelm you. Don't be defeated before you begin. By making small goals for yourself, goals which are fairly easily attainable, you build a sense of achievement, inspiration and momentum.

For instance, if you have to write a sermon, speech, or paper and you are having problems getting under way, break the task up into small pieces. Make a list of the steps you need to take to completion -- there is nothing quite so satisfying for some of us as checking things off a list.

Your list might include assembling research materials, reading through everything you have on the subject and taking notes, making a broad outline, re-reading your notes and marking them with numbers and letters from your broad outline, then going through the notes again in the outline order, organizing and beginning writing each section, and finally editing the draft and polishing the completed work.

The advantage of this technique is that instead of having one huge job ahead of you, you have a series of small jobs to do. They can be accomplished faster and you can take breaks between each little job, have a cup of tea or coffee and celebrate the completion of that segment of the whole.

This concept works equally well for organizations, by the way. We all need celebrations and parties. Small goals help give us things to celebrate and the celebrations give us the inspiration, energy, and momentum to carry on to the next goal. Huge and impossible objectives only cause despair and oftentimes failure.

An important adjunct of this concept is the importance of not giving up if you do have a defeat. You have to pick yourself right up again and go on to something else. It is no a sin to fail at something, so don't wallow in your failure. Keep on going and don't let the failure lead you to burnout.

If you are to avoid burnout, regular exercise, a good diet and relaxation are crucial. Exercise is important not only for your physical health and well-being, but also because it gets you away from situations which contribute to burnout. Do not be reluctant to sit and watch television or read or listen to or play music just to relax, (so long as it is not done to excess).

Be sure to eat three meals a day, and make mealtime stress-free islands of

sanity for you. Avoid over-consumption of caffeine, sugar and salt. Take time each day for relaxation.

Talk about the stresses and pressures facing you in your work or ministry. Who pastors you? Do you have someone who can and will minister to you? If so, be sure to talk to that person about the frustrations, anger, confusions or problems inherent in your work. For those of you who are clergy, the person who ministers to you can easily be a lay person! Do not make the mistake of thinking that only the clergy can minister.

If you feel you have nowhere else to go, take time to get additional education and training for yourself so you *do* have some choices. Make time for study and other self-improvement. See the options that already exist in your job situation. Working to improve yourself will help eliminate that “trapped” feeling.

Schedule “sanity islands,” time that is devoted to *you*. This is not just a few days off here and there, but regular, quality time that you actually schedule on a daily basis -- and stick to your schedule. If you are a morning person, you might schedule time each morning to play an instrument, meditate, read Scripture, or pray. Just as “sanity islands” are part of curing burnout, they can also help prevent it.

Insisting on having your sanity islands is just good time management since it will contribute to your overall health. It is just as important as any appointment you might be tempted to squeeze into your personal time because there is just no other place for it.

Another aspect of preventing burnout is a well developed social life. Do you have a social life outside of your church or job? Join a bowling league, bridge club, volleyball team or other regularly scheduled social activity. Get season tickets to the theatre or cinema season. Have small, quiet dinners with good friends -- and don't talk shop! Do some volunteer work that has nothing whatsoever to do with your work or ministry. Get involved in a hobby and take time each day to work at it. Cooking can also be a great therapy and release.

Separate the rest of your life from the high pressure work or ministry that is causing potential burnout. Find outside interests and make it a point not to discuss the job when you are pursuing them. Take time off occasionally and get away. Get out of your church building or other place of employment, see new things, go for walks, explore a new part of town, visit a museum you have never been to before, go sightseeing -- yes, even in your home town. Many people have never seen the tourist attractions in their own back yard.

How many busy church folk have no friends outside of the church? How about you? How can you be expected to bring people to Christ if you only know people who are already there? Spend time with people who are not involved in what you are doing. Widen your range of acquaintances.

Take planned time away from everyone connected with your work. Be sure to take at least one day, and preferably two days, off each week. For the clergy, Sunday does not count as a day off -- it is a regular work day for you. On your days off, get away from the telephone, drop-in visitors and other work-related

interruptions. Spend time doing what you enjoy doing, nurture yourself and gain strength from being alone or with someone who can help replenish you.

Take extra time after special stress periods, like high holidays, General Conference, special events you are organizing, or church or job crises.

Seek rewards for your work. If practical, ask for more money, more autonomy, more responsibility, or more recognition from co-workers and supervisors. Let people know you feel a need for some praise for your labors. Do not be afraid to express these needs to others, but do not overdo it either! Tell yourself about your successes, too. Go over the things you do well in your mind and don't dwell on the failures in your life, but rather the victories.

Avoiding burnout is the responsibility of each of us. We must be good stewards of the talents, skills and abilities which God has given us. Allowing ourselves to burnout is not good stewardship. There are ways to avoid burnout in our lives and we must take care that we utilize them so that we can continue with our respective ministries and work.

We also have the responsibility to watch for signs of burnout in our co-workers, associates, friends and pastors. We need to observe our leaders in order to help them see warning signs of burnout. We need to give other people space to get away from the high tension and pressures of most jobs and all ministry.

Unlike the generous bag lady, if we are good stewards of our resources, there will never be a time when there is nothing left in our bags for ourselves.



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Dedication

The author would like to dedicate this booklet on burnout to Chip Aldridge, whose careful ministry to me during a time of great personal loss and stress enabled my ministry to continue and this paper to be completed.

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